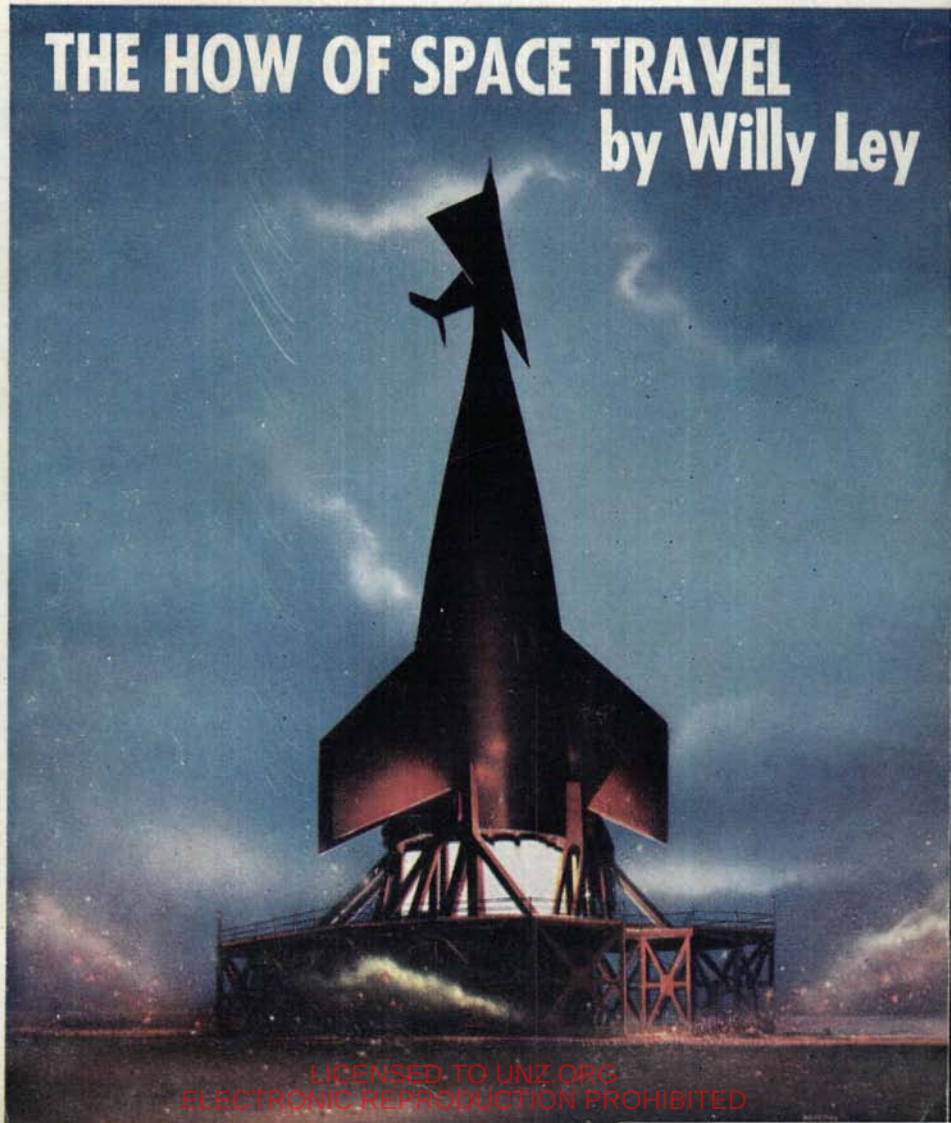
# Galaxy
SCIENCE FICTION

OCTOBER 1955
35¢

## THE HOW OF SPACE TRAVEL
by Willy Ley



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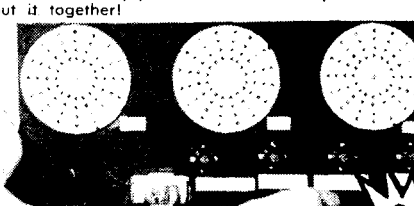

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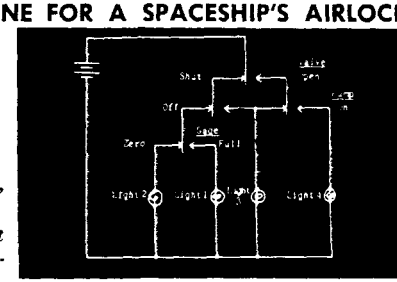


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OCTOBER, 1955 VOL. 11, NO. 1

# Galaxy

## SCIENCE FICTION

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ROBERT GUINN, Publisher — H. L. GOLD, Editor

EVELYN PAIGE, Managing Editor — WILLY LEY, Science Editor

W. I. VAN DER POEL, Art Director — JOAN De MARIO, Production Manager

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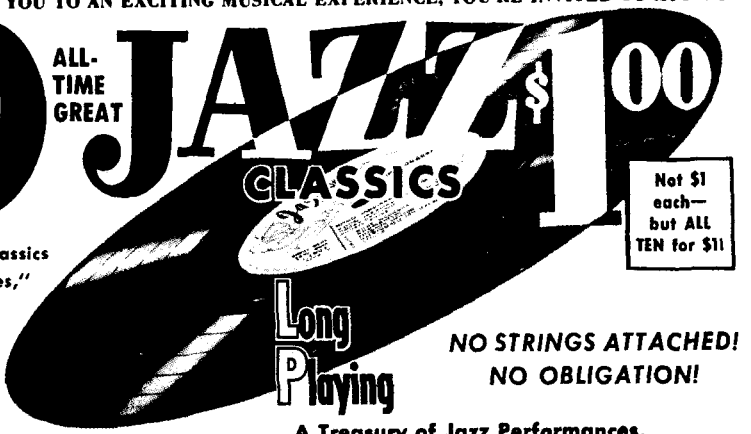
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# HIT OR MYTH?

NO DOUBT you don't own a book called *Foremost Films of 1938*, assembled by Frank Vreeland and published by Pitman. I do and I can't account for it. Why 1938? Why not 1937 or 1939? But that's not the puzzle. Since you don't have a copy, I'll give some listings that hint at the awesome secret I detect here.

*The Buccaneer* (pirate Jean Lafitte and Andrew Jackson at New Orleans in the War of 1812), with Fredric March, Akim Tamiroff, Walter Brennan.

*In Old Chicago* (Mrs. O'Leary and her cow — name of Daisy, in case you've wondered — and the Chicago fire of 1871), starring Tyrone Power, Don Ameche, Brian Donlevy; Daisy gets no screen credit.

*Algiers* (come wiz me to ze Casbah), with Charles Boyer, Hedy La Marr.

*Love Finds Andy Hardy* (love finds Andy Hardy), with Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland and Lana Turner.

*Storm In A Teacup* (a fight over an unlicensed mongrel changes the views of a dictatorial candidate for Parliament and brings a couple together), with Vivien Leigh and Rex Harrison.

*The Beachcomber* (the rummy son of a vicar and the prim daughter of a drunkard convert each other and marry), with Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester and Robert Newton.

*Happy Landing* (American bandleader dances twice with Norwegian girl, which means they are engaged, according to local custom; he flees, she follows, guess what), starring Sonja Henie, Don Ameche again, Ethel Merman, Cesar Romero.

*Mannequin* (I'd need more than two pages to go into this plot!), with Joan Crawford and Spencer Tracy.

*Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars* (one of the very few science fiction items in the book and it's not hard to understand why; Mars is swiping the nitrogen from our atmosphere and reversing Genesis by turning people to clay), starring — who else? — Buster Crabbe.

I realize this list sounds like a do-you-remember session, but that isn't what I'm after at all. Though the plots have some significance, what I really want you to note is how many of these stars are around today, 17 years later!

You don't get the point? Well,

*(Continued on Page 144)*



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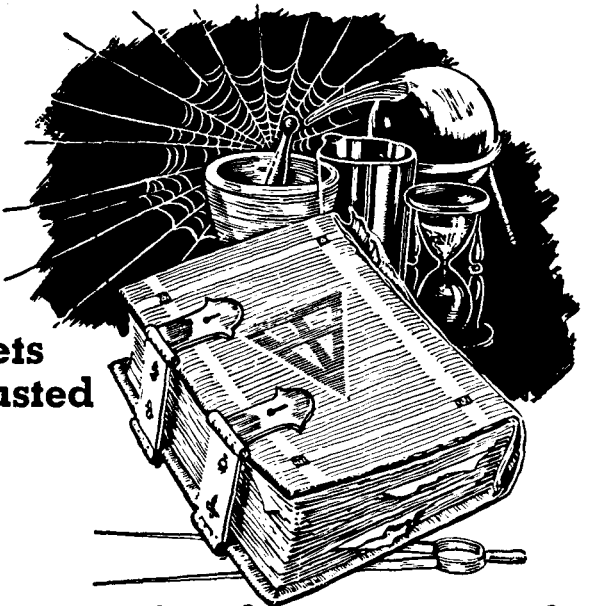

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# A Ticket to Tranai

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

Illustrated by CAVAT

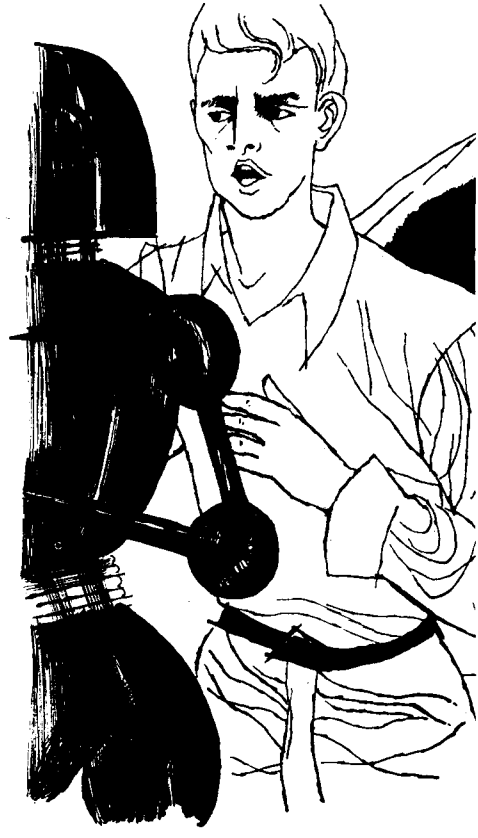
ONE FINE day in June, a tall, thin, intent, soberly dressed young man walked into the offices of the Transstellar Travel Agency. Without a glance, he marched past the gaudy travel poster depicting the Harvest Feast on Mars. The enormous photomural of dancing forests on Triganium didn't catch his eye. He ignored the somewhat suggestive painting of dawn-rites on Opiuchus II, and arrived at the desk of the booking agent.

"I would like to book passage to Tranai," the young man said.

The agent closed his copy of *Necessary Inventions* and frowned. "Tranai? Tranai? Is that one of the moons of Kent IV?"

"It is not," the young man said. "Tranai is a planet, revolving around a sun of the same name. I want to book passage there."

"Never heard of it." The agent





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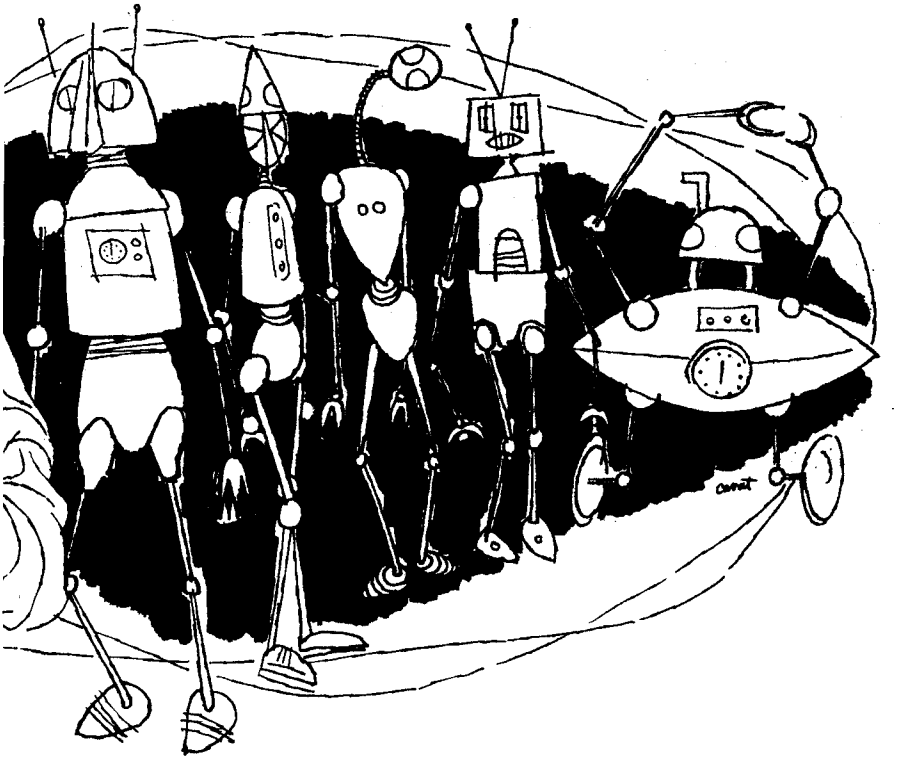
***Goodman found that Tranai was a certified genuine utopia. All its problems had been solved . . . but with what devastating logic!***





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pulled down a star catalogue, a simplified star chart, and a copy of *Lesser Space Routes.*

"Well, now," he said finally. "You learn something new every day. You want to book passage to Tranai, Mister —"

"Goodman. Marvin Goodman."

"Goodman. Well, it seems that Tranai is about as far from Earth as one can get and still be in the Milky Way. *Nobody* goes there."

"I know. Can you arrange passage for me?" Goodman asked, with a hint of suppressed excitement in his voice.

The agent shook his head. "Not a chance. Even the non-skeds don't go that far."

"How close can you get me?"

THE AGENT gave him a winning smile. "Why bother? I can send you to a world that'll have everything this Tranai place has, with the additional advantages of proximity, bargain rates, decent hotels, tours —"

"I'm going to Tranai," Goodman said grimly.

"But there's no way of getting there," the agent explained patiently. "What is it you expected to find? Perhaps I could help."

"You can help by booking me as far as —"

"Is it adventure?" the agent asked, quickly sizing up Goodman's unathletic build and scholarly stoop. "Let me suggest Africanus II, a dawn-age world filled with savage tribes, saber-tooths, man-eating ferns, quicksand, active volcanoes, pterodactyls and all the rest. Expeditions leave New York every five days and they combine the utmost in danger with absolute safety. A dinosaur head guaranteed or your money refunded."

"Tranai," Goodman said.

"Hmm." The clerk looked appraisingly at Goodman's set lips and uncompromising eyes. "Perhaps you are tired of the puritanical restrictions of Earth? Then let me suggest a trip to Almagordo III, the Pearl of the Southern Ridge Belt. Our ten day all-expense plan includes a trip through the mysterious Almagordian Casbah, visits to eight nightclubs (first drink on us), a trip to a zintal factory, where you can buy genuine zintal belts, shoes and pocketbooks at phenomenal savings, and a tour through two distilleries. The girls of Almagordo are beautiful, vivacious and refreshingly naive. They consider the Tourist the highest and most desirable type of human being. Also —"

"Tranai," Goodman said. "How close can you get me?"

Sullenly the clerk extracted a strip of tickets. "You can take the *Constellation Queen* as far as Legis II and transfer to the *Galactic Splendor,* which will take



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you to Oumé. Then you'll have to board a local, which, after stopping at Machang, Inchang, Pankang, Lekung and Oyster, will leave you at Tung-Bradar IV, if it doesn't break down en route. Then a non-sked will transport you past the Galactic Whirl (if it gets past) to Aloomsridgia, from which the mail ship will take you to Bellismoranti. I believe the mail ship is still functioning. That brings you about halfway. After that, you're on your own."

"Fine," Goodman said. "Can you have my forms made out by this afternoon?"

The clerk nodded. "Mr. Goodman," he asked in despair, "just what sort of place is this Tranai supposed to be?"

Goodman smiled a beatific smile. "A utopia," he said.

MARVIN Goodman had lived most of his life in Seakirk, New Jersey, a town controlled by one political boss or another for close to fifty years. Most of Seakirk's inhabitants were indifferent to the spectacle of corruption in high places and low, the gambling, the gang wars, the teenage drinking. They were used to the sight of their roads crumbling, their ancient water mains bursting, their power plants breaking down, their decrepit old buildings falling apart, while the bosses built bigger homes, longer swimming pools and warmer stables. People were used to it. But not Goodman.

A natural-born crusader, he wrote exposé articles that were never published, sent letters to Congress that were never read, stumped for honest candidates who were never elected, and organized the League for Civic Improvement, the People Against Gangsterism, the Citizen's Union for an Honest Police Force, the Association Against Gambling, the Committee for Equal Job Opportunities for Women, and a dozen others.

Nothing came of his efforts. The people were too apathetic to care. The politicoes simply laughed at him, and Goodman couldn't stand being laughed at. Then, to add to his troubles, his fiancée jilted him for a noisy young man in a loud sports jacket who had no redeeming feature other than a controlling interest in the Seakirk Construction Corporation.

It was a shattering blow. The girl seemed unaffected by the fact that the SCC used disproportionate amounts of sand in their concrete and shaved whole inches from the width of their steel girders. As she put it, "Gee whiz, Marvie, so what? That's how things are. You gotta be realistic."



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Goodman had no intention of being realistic. He immediately repaired to Eddie's Moonlight Bar, where, between drinks, he began to contemplate the attractions of a grass shack in the green hell of Venus.

An erect, hawk-faced old man entered the bar. Goodman could tell he was a spacer by his gravity-bound gait, his pallor, his radiation scars and his far-piercing gray eyes.

"A Tranai Special, Sam," the old spacer told the bartender.

"Coming right up, Captain Savage, sir," the bartender said.

"Tranai?" Goodman murmured involuntarily.

"Tranai," the captain said. "Never heard of it, did you, sonny?"

"No, sir," Goodman confessed.

"Well, sonny," Captain Savage said, "I'm feeling a mite wordy tonight, so I'll tell you a tale of Tranai the Blessed, out past the Galactic Whirl."

The captain's eyes grew misty and a smile softened the grim line of his lips.

"We were iron men in steel ships in those days. Me and Johnny Cavanaugh and Frog Larsen would have blasted to hell itself for half a load of terganium. Aye, and shanghaied Beelzebub for a wiper if we were short of men. Those were the days when space scurvy took every third man, and the ghost of Big Dan McClintock haunted the spaceways. Moll Gann still operated the Red Rooster Inn out on Asteroid 342-AA, asking five hundred Earth dollars for a glass of beer, and getting it too, there being no other place within ten billion miles. In those days, the Scarbies were still cutting up along Star Ridge and ships bound for Prodengum had to run the Swayback Gantlet. So you can imagine how I felt, sonny, when one fine day I came upon Tranai."

GOODMAN listened as the old captain limned a picture of the great days, of frail ships against an iron sky, ships outward bound, forever outward, to the far limits of the Galaxy.

And there, at the edge of the Great Nothing, was Tranai.

Tranai, where The Way had been found and men were no longer bound to The Wheel! Tranai the Bountiful, a peaceful, creative, happy society, not saints or ascetics, not intellectuals, but ordinary people who had achieved utopia.

For an hour, Captain Savage spoke of the multiform marvels of Tranai. After finishing his story, he complained of a dry throat. Space throat, he called it, and Goodman ordered him another Tranai Special and one for himself. Sipping the exotic, green-



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gray mixture, Goodman too was lost in the dream.

Finally, very gently, he asked, "Why don't you go back, Captain?"

The old man shook his head. "Space gout. I'm grounded for good. We didn't know much about modern medicine in those days. All I'm good for now is a landsman's job."

"What job do you have?"

"I'm a foreman for the Seakirk Construction Corporation," the old man sighed. "Me, that once commanded a fifty-tube clipper. The way those people make concrete. . . Shall we have another short one in honor of beautiful Tranai?"

They had several short ones. When Goodman left the bar, his mind was made up. Somewhere in the Universe, the *modus vivendi* had been found, the working solution to Man's old dream of perfection.

He could settle for nothing less.

The next day, he quit his job as designer at the East Coast Robot Works and drew his life savings out of the bank.

He was going to Tranai.

HE BOARDED the *Constellation Queen* for Legis II and took the *Galactic Splendor* to Oumé. After stopping at Machang, Inchang, Pankang, Lekung and Oyster — dreary little places — he reached Tung-Bradar IV. Without incident, he passed the Galactic Whirl and finally reached Bellismoranti, where the influence of Terra ended.

For an exorbitant fee, a local spaceline took him to Dvasta II. From there, a freighter transported him past Seves, Olgo and Mi, to the double planet Mvanti. There he was bogged down for three months and used the time to take a hypnopedic course in the Tranaian language. At last he hired a bush pilot to take him to Ding.

On Ding, he was arrested as a Higastomeritreian spy, but managed to escape in the cargo of an ore rocket bound for g'Moree. At g'Moree, he was treated for frostbite, heat poisoning and superficial radiation burns, and at last arranged passage to Tranai.

He could hardly believe it when the ship slipped past the moons Doé and Ri, to land at Port Tranai.

After the airlocks opened, Goodman found himself in a state of profound depression. Part of it was plain letdown, inevitable after a journey such as his. But more than that, he was suddenly terrified that Tranai might turn out to be a fraud.

He had crossed the Galaxy on the basis of an old spaceman's yarn. But now it all seemed less



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likely. Eldorado was a more probable place than the Tranai he expected to find.

He disembarked. Port Tranai seemed a pleasant enough town. The streets were filled with people and the shops were piled high with goods. The men he passed looked much like humans anywhere. The women were quite attractive.

But there was something strange here, something subtly yet definitely wrong, something *alien*. It took a moment before he could puzzle it out.

Then he realized that there were at least ten men for every woman in sight. And stranger still, practically all the women he saw apparently were under eighteen or over thirty-five.

What had happened to the nineteen-to-thirty-five age group? Was there a taboo on their appearing in public? Had a plague struck them?

He would just have to wait and find out.

He went to the Idrig Building, where all Tranai's governmental functions were carried out, and presented himself at the office of the Extraterrestrials Minister. He was admitted at once.

The office was small and cluttered, with strange blue blotches on the wallpaper. What struck Goodman at once was a high-powered rifle complete with silencer and telescopic sight, hanging ominously from one wall. He had no time to speculate on this, for the Minister bounded out of his chair and vigorously shook Goodman's hand.

THE MINISTER was a stout, jolly man of about fifty. Around his neck he wore a small medallion stamped with the Tranian seal — a bolt of lightning splitting an ear of corn. Goodman assumed, correctly, that this was an official seal of office.

"Welcome to Tranai," the minister said heartily. He pushed a pile of papers from a chair and motioned Goodman to sit down.

"Mister Minister —" Goodman began, in formal Tranian.

"Den Melith is the name. Call me Den. "We're all quite informal around here. Put your feet up on the desk and make yourself at home. Cigar?"

"No, thank you," Goodman said, somewhat taken back. "Mister — ah — Den, I have come from Terra, a planet you may have heard of."

"Sure I have," said Melith. "Nervous, hustling sort of place, isn't it? No offense intended, of course."

"Of course. That's exactly how I feel about it. The reason I came here —" Goodman hesitated, hop-



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ing he wouldn't sound too ridiculous. "Well, I heard certain stories about Tranai. Thinking them over now, they seem preposterous. But if you don't mind, I'd like to ask you —"

"Ask anything," Melith said expansively. "You'll get a straight answer."

"Thank you. I heard that there has been no war of any sort on Tranai for four hundred years."

"Six hundred," Melith corrected. "And none in sight."

"Someone told me that there is no crime on Tranai."

"None whatsoever."

"And therefore no police force or courts, no judges, sheriffs, marshals, executioners, truant officers or government investigators. No prisons, reformatories or other places of detention."

"We have no need of them," Melith explained, "since we have no crime."

"I have heard," said Goodman, "that there is no poverty on Tranai."

"None that I ever heard of," Melith said cheerfully. "Are you sure you won't have a cigar?"

"No, thank you." Goodman was leaning forward eagerly now. "I understand that you have achieved a stable economy without resorting to socialistic, communistic, fascistic or bureaucratic practices."

"Certainly," Melith said.

"That yours is, in fact, a free enterprise society, where individual initiative flourishes and governmental functions are kept to an absolute minimum."

MELITH nodded. "By and large, the government concerns itself with minor regulatory matters, care of the aged and beautifying the landscape."

"Is it true that you have discovered a method of wealth distribution without resorting to governmental intervention, without even taxation, based entirely upon individual choice?" Goodman challenged.

"Oh, yes, absolutely."

"Is it true that there is no corruption in any phase of the Tranaian government?"

"None," Melith said. "I suppose that's why we have a hard time finding men to hold public office."

"Then Captain Savage was right!" Goodman cried, unable to control himself any longer. "This is utopia!"

"We like it," Melith said.

Goodman took a deep breath and asked, "May I stay here?"

"Why not?" Melith pulled out a form. "We have no restrictions on immigration. Tell me, what is your occupation?"

"On Earth, I was a robot designer."

"Plenty of openings in that."



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Melith started to fill in the form. His pen emitted a blob of ink. Casually, the minister threw the pen against the wall, where it shattered, adding another blue blotch to the wallpaper.

"We'll make out the paper some other time," he said. "I'm not in the mood now." He leaned back in his chair. "Let me give you a word of advice. Here on Tranai, we feel that we have come pretty close to utopia, as you call it. But ours is not a highly organized state. We have no complicated set of laws. We live by observance of a number of unwritten laws, or customs, as you might call them. You will discover what they are. You would be advised — although certainly not ordered — to follow them."

"Of course I will," Goodman exclaimed. "I can assure you, sir, I have no intention of endangering any phase of your paradise."

"Oh, I wasn't worried about *us*," Melith said with an amused smile. "It was your own safety I was considering. Perhaps my wife has some further advice for you."

HE PUSHED a large red button on his desk. Immediately there was a bluish haze. The haze solidified, and in a moment Goodman saw a handsome young woman standing before him.

"Good morning, my dear," she said to Melith.

"It's afternoon," Melith informed her. "My dear, this young man came all the way from Earth to live on Tranai. I gave him the usual advice. Is there anything else we can do for him?"

Mrs. Melith thought for a moment, then asked Goodman, "Are you married?"

"No, ma'am," Goodman answered.

"In that case, he should meet a nice girl," Mrs. Melith told her husband. "Bachelordom is not encouraged on Tranai, although certainly not prohibited. Let me see. . . How about that cute Driganti girl?"

"She's engaged," Melith said.

"Really? Have I been in stasis *that* long? My dear, it's not too thoughtful of you."

"I was busy," Melith said apologetically.

"How about Mihna Vensis?"

"Not his type."

"Janna Vley?"

"Perfect!" Melith winked at Goodman. "A most attractive little lady." He found a new pen in his desk, scribbled an address and handed it to Goodman. "My wife will telephone her to be expecting you tomorrow evening."

"And do come around for dinner some night," said Mrs. Melith.

"Delighted," Goodman replied,



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in a complete daze.

"It's been nice meeting you," Mrs. Melith said. Her husband pushed the red button. The blue haze formed and Mrs. Melith vanished.

"Have to close up now," said Melith, glancing at his watch. "Can't work overtime — people might start talking. Drop in some day and we'll make out those forms. You really should call on Supreme President Borg, too, at the National Mansion. Or possibly he'll call on you. Don't let the old fox put anything over on you. And don't forget about Janna." He winked roguishly and escorted Goodman to the door.

In a few moments, Goodman found himself alone on the sidewalk. He had reached utopia, he told himself, a real, genuine, sure-enough utopia.

But there were some very puzzling things about it.

GOODMAN ate dinner at a small restaurant and checked in at a nearby hotel. A cheerful bellhop showed him to his room, where Goodman stretched out immediately on the bed. Wearily he rubbed his eyes, trying to sort out his impressions.

So much had happened to him, all in one day! And so much was bothering him. The ratio of men to women, for example. He had meant to ask Melith about that.

But Melith might not be the man to ask, for there were some curious things about him. Like throwing his pen against the wall. Was that the act of a mature, responsible official? And Melith's wife . . .

Goodman knew that Mrs. Melith had come out of a derrsin stasis field; he had recognized the characteristic blue haze. The derrsin was used on Terra, too. Sometimes there were good medical reasons for suspending all activity, all growth, all decay. Suppose a patient had a desperate need for a certain serum, procurable only on Mars. Simply project the person into stasis until the serum could arrive.

But on Terra, only a licensed doctor could operate the field. There were strict penalties for its misuse.

He had never heard of keeping one's wife in one.

Still, if all the wives on Tranai *were* kept in stasis, that would explain the absence of the nineteen-to-thirty-five age group and would account for the ten-to-one ratio of men to women.

But what was the reason for this technological purdah?

And something else was on Goodman's mind, something quite insignificant, but bothersome all the same.

That rifle on Melith's wall.

Did he hunt game with it?



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Pretty big game, then. Target practice? Not with a telescopic sight. Why the silencer? Why did he keep it in his office?

But these were minor matters, Goodman decided, little local idiosyncracies which would become clear when he had lived a while on Tranai. He couldn't expect immediate and complete comprehension of what was, after all, an alien planet.

HE WAS JUST beginning to doze off when he heard a knock at his door.

"Come in," he called.

A small, furtive, gray-faced man hurried in and closed the door behind him. "You're the man from Terra, aren't you?"

"That's right."

"I figured you'd come here," the little man said, with a pleased smile. "Hit it right the first time. Going to stay on Tranai?"

"I'm here for good."

"Fine," the man said. "How would you like to become Supreme President?"

"Huh?"

"Good pay, easy hours, only a one-year term. You look like a public-spirited type," the man said sunnily. "How about it?"

Goodman hardly knew what to answer. "Do you mean," he asked incredulously, "that you offer the highest office in the land so casually?"

"What do you mean, *casually?*" the little man spluttered. "Do you think we offer the Supreme Presidency to just anybody? It's a great honor to be asked."

"I didn't mean —"

"And you, as a Terran, are uniquely suited."

"Why?"

"Well, it's common knowledge that Terrans derive pleasure from ruling. We Tranians don't, that's all. Too much trouble."

As simple as that. The reformer blood in Goodman began to boil. Ideal as Tranai was, there was undoubtedly room for improvement. He had a sudden vision of himself as ruler of utopia, doing the great task of making perfection even better. But caution stopped him from agreeing at once. Perhaps the man was a crackpot.

"Thank you for asking me," Goodman said. "I'll have to think it over. Perhaps I should talk with the present incumbent and find out something about the nature of the work."

"Well, why do you think I'm here?" the little man demanded. "I'm Supreme President Borg."

Only then did Goodman notice the official medallion around the little man's neck.

"Let me know your decision. I'll be at the National Mansion." He shook Goodman's hand, and left.



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Goodman waited five minutes, then rang for the bellhop. "Who was that man?"

"That was Supreme President Borg," the bellhop told him. "Did you take the job?"

Goodman shook his head slowly. He suddenly realized that he had a *great* deal to learn about Tranai.

THE NEXT morning, Goodman listed the various robot factories of Port Tranai in alphabetical order and went out in search of a job. To his amazement, he found one with no trouble at all, at the very first place he looked. The great Abbag Home Robot Works signed him on after only a cursory glance at his credentials.

His new employer, Mr. Abbag, was short and fierce-looking, with a great mane of white hair and an air of tremendous personal energy.

"Glad to have a Terran on board," Abbag said. "I understand you're an ingenious people and we certainly need some ingenuity around here. I'll be honest with you, Goodman — I'm hoping to profit by your alien viewpoint. We've reached an impasse."

"Is it a production problem?" Goodman asked.

"I'll show you." Abbag led Goodman through the factory, around the Stamping Room, Heat-Treat, X-ray Analysis, Final Assembly and to the Testing Room. This room was laid out like a combination kitchen-living room. A dozen robots were lined up against one wall.

"Try one out," Abbag said.

Goodman walked up to the nearest robot and looked at its controls. They were simple enough; self-explanatory, in fact. He put the machine through a standard repertoire: picking up objects, washing pots and pans, setting a table. The robot's responses were correct enough, but maddeningly slow. On Earth, such sluggishness had been ironed out a hundred years ago. Apparently they were behind the times here on Tranai.

"Seems pretty slow," Goodman commented cautiously.

"You're right," Abbag said. "Damned slow. Personally, I think it's about right. But Consumer Research indicates that our customers want it slower still."

"Huh?"

"Ridiculous, isn't it?" Abbag asked moodily. "We'll lose money if we slow it down any more. Take a look at its guts."

Goodman opened the back panel and blinked at the maze of wiring within. After a moment, he was able to figure it out. The robot was built like a modern Earth machine, with the usual



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inexpensive high-speed circuits. But special signal-delay relays, impulse-rejection units and step-down gears had been installed.

"Just tell me," Abbag demanded angrily, "how can we slow it down any more without building the thing a third bigger and twice as expensive? I don't know what kind of a disimprovement they'll be asking for next."

GOODMAN was trying to adjust his thinking to the concept of *disimproving* a machine.

On Earth, the plants were always trying to build robots with faster, smoother, more accurate responses. He had never found any reason to question the wisdom of this. He still didn't.

"And as if that weren't enough," Abbag complained, "the new plastic we developed for this particular model has catalyzed or some damned thing. Watch."

He drew back his foot and kicked the robot in the middle. The plastic bent like a sheet of tin. He kicked again. The plastic bent still further and the robot began to click and flash pathetically. A third kick shattered the case. The robot's innards exploded in spectacular fashion, scattering over the floor.

"Pretty flimsy," Goodman said.

"Not flimsy enough. It's supposed to fly apart on the first kick. Our customers won't get any satisfaction out of stubbing their toes on its stomach all day. But tell me, how am I supposed to produce a plastic that'll take normal wear and tear — we don't want these things falling apart accidentally — and still go to pieces when a customer wants it to?"

"Wait a minute," Goodman protested. "Let me get this straight. You purposely slow these robots down so they will irritate people enough to destroy them?"

Abbag raised both eyebrows. "Of course!"

"Why?"

"You *are* new here," Abbag said. "Any child knows that. It's fundamental."

"I'd appreciate it if you'd explain."

Abbag sighed. "Well, first of all, you are undoubtedly aware that *any* mechanical contrivance is a source of irritation. Humankind has a deep and abiding distrust of machines. Psychologists call it the instinctive reaction of life to pseudo-life. Will you go along with me on that?"

MARVIN Goodman remembered all the anxious literature he had read about machines revolting, cybernetic brains taking over the world, androids on the march, and the like. He thought of humorous little news-



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paper items about a man shooting his television set, smashing his toaster against the wall, "getting even" with his car. He remembered all the robot jokes, with their undertone of deep hostility.

"I guess I can go along on that," said Goodman.

"Then allow me to restate the proposition," Abbag said pedantically. "Any machine is a source of irritation. The better a machine operates, the stronger the irritation. So, by extension, a *perfectly operating* machine is a focal point for frustration, loss of self-esteem, undirected resentment —"

"Hold on there!" Goodman objected. "I won't go *that* far!"

"— and schizophrenic fantasies," Abbag continued inexorably. "But machines are necessary to an advanced economy. Therefore the best *human* solution is to have malfunctioning ones."

"I don't see that at all."

"It's obvious. On Terra, your gadgets work close to the optimum, producing inferiority feelings in their operators. But unfortunately you have a masochistic tribal tabu against destroying them. Result? Generalized anxiety in the presence of the sacrosanct and unhumanly efficient Machine, and a search for an aggression-object, usually a wife or friend. A very poor state of affairs. Oh, it's efficient, I suppose, in terms of robot-hour production, but very inefficient in terms of long-range health and well-being."

"I'm not sure —"

"The human is an anxious beast. Here on Tranai, we direct anxiety toward this particular point and let it serve as an outlet for a lot of other frustrations as well. A man's had enough — blam! He kicks hell out of his robot. There's an immediate and therapeutic discharge of feeling, a valuable — and valid — sense of superiority over mere machinery, a lessening of general tension, a healthy flow of adrenin into the bloodstream, and a boost to the industrial economy of Tranai, since he'll go right out and buy another robot. And what, after all, has he done? He hasn't beaten his wife, suicided, declared a war, invented a new weapon, or indulged in any of the other more common modes of aggression-resolution. He has simply smashed an inexpensive robot which he can replace immediately."

"I guess it'll take me a little time to understand," Goodman admitted.

"Of course it will. I'm sure you're going to be a valuable man here, Goodman. Think over what I've said and try to figure out some inexpensive way of dis-



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improving this robot."

Goodman pondered the problem for the rest of the day, but he couldn't immediately adjust his thinking to the idea of producing an inferior machine. It seemed vaguely blasphemous. He knocked off work at five-thirty, dissatisfied with himself, but determined to do better — or worse, depending on viewpoint and conditioning.

AFTER A quick and lonely supper, Goodman decided to call on Janna Vley. He didn't want to spend the evening alone with his thoughts and he was in desperate need of finding something pleasant, simple and uncomplicated in this complex utopia. Perhaps this Janna would be the answer.

The Vley home was only a dozen blocks away and he decided to walk.

The basic trouble was that he had had his own idea of what utopia would be like and it was difficult adjusting his thinking to the real thing. He had imagined a pastoral setting, a planetful of people in small, quaint villages, walking around in flowing robes and being very wise and gentle and understanding. Children who played in the golden sunlight, young folk danced in the village square . . .

Ridiculous! He had pictured a tableau rather than a scene, a series of stylized postures instead of the ceaseless movement of life. Humans could never live that way, even assuming they wanted to. If they could, they would no longer be humans.

He reached the Vley house and paused irresolutely outside. What was he getting himself into now? What alien — although indubitably utopian — customs would he run into?

He almost turned away. But the prospect of a long night alone in his hotel room was singularly unappealing. Gritting his teeth, he rang the bell.

A red-haired, middle-aged man of medium height opened the door. "Oh, you must be that Terran fellow. Janna's getting ready. Come in and meet the wife."

He escorted Goodman into a pleasantly furnished living room and pushed a red button on the wall. Goodman wasn't startled this time by the bluish derrsin haze. After all, the manner in which Tranaians treated their women was their own business.

A handsome woman of about twenty-eight appeared from the haze.

"My dear," Vley said, "this is the Terran, Mr. Goodman."

"So pleased to meet you," Mrs. Vley said. "Can I get you a drink?"

Goodman nodded. Vley point-



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ed out a comfortable chair. In a moment, Mrs. Vley brought in a tray of frosted drinks and sat down.

"So you're from Terra," said Mr. Vley. "Nervous, hustling sort of place, isn't it? People always on the go?"

"Yes, I suppose it is," Goodman replied.

"Well, you'll like it here. We know how to live. It's all a matter of —"

There was a rustle of skirts on the stairs. Goodman got to his feet.

"Mr. Goodman, this is our daughter Janna," Mrs. Vley said.

GOODMAN noted at once that Janna's hair was the exact color of the supernova in Circe, her eyes were that deep, unbelievable blue of the autumn sky over Algo II, her lips were the tender pink of a Scarsclott-Turner jet stream, her nose —

But he had run out of astronomical comparisons, which weren't suitable anyhow. Janna was a slender and amazingly pretty blonde girl and Goodman was suddenly very glad he had crossed the Galaxy and come to Tranai.

"Have a good time, children," Mrs. Vley said.

"Don't come in too late," Mr. Vley told Janna.

Exactly as parents said on Earth to their children.

There was nothing exotic about the date. They went to an inexpensive night club, danced, drank a little, talked a lot. Goodman was amazed at their immediate *rapport*. Janna agreed with everything he said. It was refreshing to find intelligence in so pretty a girl.

She was impressed, almost overwhelmed, by the dangers he had faced in crossing the Galaxy. She had always known that Terrans were adventurous (though nervous) types, but the risks Goodman had taken passed all understanding.

She shuddered when he spoke of the deadly Galactic Whirl and listened wide-eyed to his tales of running the notorious Swayback Gantlet, past the bloodthirsty Scarbies who were still cutting up along Star Ridge and infesting the hell holes of Prodengum. As Goodman put it, Terrans were iron men in steel ships, exploring the edges of the Great Nothing.

Janna didn't even speak until Goodman told of paying five hundred Terran dollars for a glass of beer at Moll Gann's Red Rooster Inn on Asteroid 342-AA.

"You must have been very thirsty," she said thoughtfully.

"Not particularly," Goodman said. "Money just didn't mean much out there."

"Oh. But wouldn't it have been



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better to have saved it? I mean someday you might have a wife and children —" She blushed.

Goodman said coolly, "Well, that part of my life is over. I'm going to marry and settle down right here on Tranai."

"How *nice!*" she cried.

It was a most successful evening.

Goodman returned Janna to her home at a respectable hour and arranged a date for the following evening. Made bold by his own tales, he kissed her on the cheek. She didn't really seem to mind, but Goodman didn't try to press his advantage.

"Till tomorrow then," she said, smiled at him, and closed the door.

HE WALKED away feeling light-headed. Janna! Janna! Was it conceivable that he was in love already? Why not? Love at first sight was a proven psychophysiological possibility and, as such, was perfectly respectable. Love in utopia! How wonderful it was that here, upon a perfect planet, he had found the perfect girl!

A man stepped out of the shadows and blocked his path. Goodman noted that he was wearing a black silk mask which covered everything except his eyes. He was carrying a large and powerful-looking blaster, and it was pointed steadily at Goodman's stomach.

"Okay, buddy," the man said, "gimme all your money."

"What?" Goodman gasped.

"You heard me. Your money. Hand it over."

"You can't do this," Goodman said, too startled to think coherently. "There's no crime on Tranai!"

"Who said there was?" the man asked quietly. "I'm merely asking you for your money. Are you going to hand it over peacefully or do I have to club it out of you?"

"You can't get away with this! Crime does not pay!"

"Don't be ridiculous," the man said. He hefted the heavy blaster.

"All right. Don't get excited." Goodman pulled out his billfold, which contained all he had in the world, and gave its contents to the masked man.

The man counted it, and he seemed impressed. "Better than I expected. Thanks, buddy. Take it easy now."

He hurried away down a dark street.

Goodman looked wildly around for a policeman, until he remembered that there were no police on Tranai. He saw a small cocktail lounge on the corner with a neon sign saying Kitty Kat Bar. He hurried into it.

Inside, there was only a bar-



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tender, somberly wiping glasses.

"I've been robbed!" Goodman shouted at him.

"So?" the bartender said, not even looking up.

"But I thought there wasn't any crime on Tranai."

"There isn't."

"But I was *robbed.*"

"You must be new here," the bartender said, finally looking at him.

"I just came in from Terra."

"Terra? Nervous, hustling sort of —"

"Yes, yes," Goodman said. He was getting a little tired of that stereotype. "But how can there be no crime on Tranai if I was robbed?"

"That should be obvious. On Tranai, robbery is no crime."

"But robbery is *always* a crime!"

"What color mask was he wearing?"

Goodman thought for a moment. "Black. Black silk."

The bartender nodded. "Then he was a government tax collector."

"That's a ridiculous way to collect taxes," Goodman snapped.

THE BARTENDER set a Tranai Special in front of Goodman. "Try to see this in terms of the general welfare. The government has to have *some* money. By collecting it this way, we can avoid the necessity of an income tax, with all its complicated legal and legislative apparatus. And in terms of mental health, it's far better to extract money in a short, quick, painless operation than to permit the citizen to worry all year long about paying at a specific date."

Goodman downed his drink and the bartender set up another.

"But," Goodman said, "I thought this was a society based upon the concepts of free will and individual initiative."

"It is," the bartender told him. "Then surely the government, what little there is of it, has the same right to free will as any private citizen, hasn't it?"

Goodman couldn't quite figure that out, so he finished his second drink. "Could I have another of those? I'll pay you as soon as I can."

"Sure, sure," the bartender said good-naturedly, pouring another drink and one for himself.

Goodman said, "You asked me what color his mask was. Why?"

"Black is the government mask color. Private citizens wear white masks."

"You mean that private citizens commit robbery also?"

"Well, certainly! That's our method of wealth distribution. Money is equalized without government intervention, without even taxation, entirely in terms



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of individual initiative." The bartender nodded emphatically. "And it works perfectly, too. Robbery is a great leveler, you know."

"I suppose it is," Goodman admitted, finishing his third drink. "If I understand correctly, then, any citizen can pack a blaster, put on a mask, and go out and rob."

"Exactly," the bartender said. "Within limits, of course."

Goodman snorted. "If that's how it works, I can play that way. Could you loan me a mask? And a gun?"

The bartender reached under the bar. "Be sure to return them, though. Family heirlooms."

"I'll return them," Goodman promised. "And when I come back, I'll pay for my drinks."

He slipped the blaster into his belt, donned the mask and left the bar. If this was how things worked on Tranai, he could adjust all right. Rob him, would they? He'd rob them right back and then some!

HE FOUND a suitably dark street corner and huddled in the shadows, waiting. Presently he heard footsteps and, peering around the corner, saw a portly, well-dressed Tranaian



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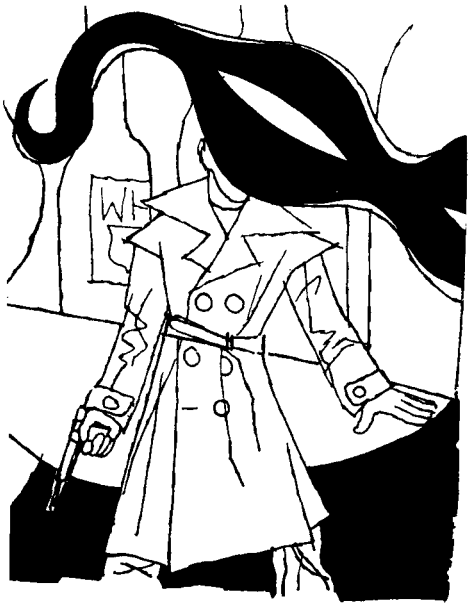

hurrying down the street.

Goodman stepped in front of him, snarling, "Hold it, buddy."

The Tranaian stopped and looked at Goodman's blaster. "Hmmm. Using a wide-aperture Drog 3, eh? Rather an old-fashioned weapon. How do you like it?"

"It's fine," Goodman said. "Hand over your —"

"Slow trigger action, though," the Tranian mused. "Personally, I recommend a Mils-Sleeven needler. As it happens, I'm a sales representative for Sleeven Arms. I could get you a very good price on a trade-in —"

"Hand over your money," Goodman barked.

The portly Tranaian smiled. "The basic defect of your Drog 3 is the fact that it won't fire at all unless you release the safety lock." He reached out and slapped the gun out of Goodman's hand. "You see? You couldn't have done a thing about it." He started to walk away.

Goodman scooped up the blaster, found the safety lock, released it and hurried after the Tranaian.

"Stick up your hands," Goodman ordered, beginning to feel slightly desperate.

"No, no, my good man," the Tranian said, not even looking back. "Only one try to a customer. Mustn't break the unwritten law, you know."

Goodman stood and watched until the man turned a corner and was gone. He checked the Drog 3 carefully and made sure that all safeties were off. Then he resumed his post.

After an hour's wait, he heard footsteps again. He tightened his grip on the blaster. This time he was going to rob and nothing was going to stop him.

"Okay, buddy," he said, "hands up!"

The victim this time was a short, stocky Tranaian, dressed in old workman's clothes. He gaped at the gun in Goodman's hand.



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"Don't shoot, mister," the Tranaian pleaded.

THAT WAS more like it! Goodman felt a glow of deep satisfaction.

"Just don't move," he warned. "I've got all safeties off."

"I can see that," the stocky man said cringing. "Be careful with that cannon, mister. I ain't moving a hair."

"You'd better not. Hand over your money."

"Money?"

"Yes, your money, and be quick about it."

"I don't have any money," the man whined. "Mister, I'm a poor man. I'm poverty-stricken."

"There is no poverty on Tranai," Goodman said sententiously.

"I know. But you can get so close to it, you wouldn't know the difference. Give me a break, mister."

"Haven't you any initiative?" Goodman asked. "If you're poor, why don't you go out and rob like everybody else?"

"I just haven't had a chance. First the kid got the whooping cough and I was up every night with her. Then the derrsin broke down, so I had the wife yakking at me all day long. I say there oughta be a spare derrsin in every house! So she decided to clean the place while the derrsin generator was being fixed and she put my blaster somewhere and she can't remember where. So I was all set to borrow a friend's blaster when —"

"That's enough," Goodman said. "This is a robbery and I'm going to rob you of *something*. Hand over your wallet."

The man snuffled miserably and gave Goodman a worn billfold. Inside it, Goodman found one deeglo, the equivalent of a Terran dollar.

"It's all I got," the man snuffled miserably, "but you're welcome to it. I know how it is, standing on a drafty street corner all night —"

"Keep it," Goodman said, handing the billfold back to the man and walking off.

"Gee, thanks, mister!"

Goodman didn't answer. Disconsolately, he returned to the Kitty Kat Bar and gave back the bartender's blaster and mask. When he explained what had happened, the bartender burst into rude laughter.

"Didn't have any money! Man, that's the oldest trick in the books. Everybody carries a fake wallet for robberies — sometimes two or even three. Did you search him?"

"No," Goodman confessed.

"Brother, are you a greenhorn!"

"I guess I am. Look, I really will pay you for those drinks as



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soon as I can make some money."

"Sure, sure," the bartender said. "You better go home and get some sleep. You had a busy night."

Goodman agreed. Wearily he returned to his hotel room and was asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

HE REPORTED at the Abbag Home Robot Works and manfully grappled with the problem of disimproving automata. Even in unhuman work such as this, Terran ingenuity began to tell.

Goodman began to develop a new plastic for the robot's case. It was a silicone, a relative of the "silly putty" that had appeared on Earth a long while back. It had the desired properties of toughness, resiliency and long wear; it would stand a lot of abuse, too. But the case would shatter immediately and with spectacular effect upon receiving a kick delivered with an impact of thirty pounds or more.

His employer praised him for this development, gave him a bonus (which he sorely needed), and told him to keep working on the idea and, if possible, to bring the needed impact down to twenty-three pounds. This, the research department told them, was the average frustration kick.

He was kept so busy that he had practically no time to explore further the mores and folkways of Tranai. He did manage to see the Citizen's Booth. This uniquely Tranaian institution was housed in a small building on a quiet back street.

Upon entering, he was confronted by a large board, upon which was listed the names of the present officeholders of Tranai, and their titles. Beside each name was a button. The attendant told Goodman that, by pressing a button, a citizen expressed his disapproval of that official's acts. The pressed button was automatically registered in History Hall and was a permanent mark against the officeholder.

No minors were allowed to press the buttons, of course.

Goodman considered this somewhat ineffectual; but perhaps, he told himself, officials on Tranai were differently motivated from those on Earth.

He saw Janna almost every evening and together they explored the many cultural aspects of Tranai: the cocktail lounges and movies, the concert halls, the art exhibitions, the science museum, the fairs and festivals. Goodman carried a blaster and, after several unsuccessful attempts, robbed a merchant of nearly five hundred deeglo.

Janna was ecstatic over the achievement, as any sensible



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Tranaian girl would be, and they celebrated at the Kitty Kat Bar. Janna's parents agreed that Goodman seemed to be a good provider.

The following night, the five hundred deeglo — plus some of Goodman's bonus money — was robbed back, by a man of approximately the size and build of the bartender at the Kitty Kat, carrying an ancient Drog 3 blaster.

Goodman consoled himself with the thought that the money was circulating freely, as the system had intended.

THEN he had another triumph. One day at the Abbag Home Robot Works, he discovered a completely new process for making a robot's case. It was a special plastic, impervious even to serious bumps and falls. The robot owner had to wear special shoes, with a catalytic agent imbedded in the heels. When he kicked the robot, the catalyst came in contact with the plastic case, with immediate and gratifying effect.

Abbag was a little uncertain at first; it seemed too gimmicky. But the thing caught on like wildfire and the Home Robot Works went into the shoe business as a subsidiary, selling at least one pair with every robot.

This horizontal industrial development was very gratifying to the plant's stockholders and was really more important than the original catalyst-plastic discovery. Goodman received a substantial raise in pay and a generous bonus.

On the crest of his triumphant wave, he proposed to Janna and was instantly accepted. Her parents favored the match; all that remained was to obtain official sanction from the government, since Goodman was still technically an alien.

Accordingly, he took a day off from work and walked down to the Idrig Building to see Melith. It was a glorious spring day of the sort that Tranai has for ten months out of the year, and Goodman walked with a light and springy step. He was in love, a success in business, and soon to become a citizen of utopia.

Of course, utopia could use some changes, for even Tranai wasn't quite perfect. Possibly he should accept the Supreme Presidency, in order to make the needed reforms. But there was no rush. . .

"Hey, mister," a voice said, "can you spare a deeglo?"

Goodman looked down and saw, squatting on the pavement, an unwashed old man, dressed in rags, holding out a tin cup.

"What?" Goodman asked.

"Can you spare a deeglo,



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brother?" the man repeated in a wheedling voice. "Help a poor man buy a cup of oglo? Haven't eaten in two days, mister."

"This is disgraceful! Why don't you get a blaster and go out and rob someone?"

"I'm too old," the man whimpered. "My victims just laugh at me."

"Are you sure you aren't just lazy?" Goodman asked sternly.

"I'm not, sir!" the beggar said. "Just look how my hands shake!"

He held out both dirty paws; they trembled.

GOODMAN took out his billfold and gave the old man a deeglo. "I thought there was no poverty on Tranai. I understood that the government took care of the aged."

"The government does," said the old man. "Look." He held out his cup. Engraved on its side was: *Government Authorized Beggar, Number DB*-43241-3.

"You mean the government makes you do this?"

"The government *lets* me do it," the old man told him. "Begging is a government job and is reserved for the aged and infirm."

"Why, that's disgraceful!"

"You must be a stranger here."

"I'm a Terran."

"Aha! Nervous, hustling sort of people, aren't you?"

"*Our* government does not let people beg," Goodman said.

"No? What do the old people do? Live off their children? Or sit in some home for the aged and wait for death by boredom? Not here, young man. On Tranai, every old man is assured of a government job, and one for which he needs no particular skill, although skill helps. Some apply for indoor work, within the churches and theatres. Others like the excitement of fairs and carnivals. Personally, I like it outdoors. My job keeps me out in the sunlight and fresh air, gives me mild exercise, and helps me meet many strange and interesting people, such as yourself."

"But *begging!*"

"What other work would I be suited for?"

"I don't know. But — but look at you! Dirty, unwashed, in filthy clothes —"

"These are my working clothes," the government beggar said. "You should see me on Sunday."

"You have other clothes?"

"I certainly do, and a pleasant little apartment, and a season box at the opera, and two Home Robots, and probably more money in the bank than you've seen in your life. It's been pleasant talking to you, young man, and thanks for your contribution. But now I must return to work and suggest you do likewise."



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Goodman walked away, glancing over his shoulder at the government beggar. He observed that the old man seemed to be doing a thriving business.

But *begging!*

Really, that sort of thing should be stopped. If he ever assumed the Presidency — and quite obviously he should — he would look into the whole matter more carefully.

It seemed to him that there had to be a more dignified answer.

AT THE Idrig Building, Goodman told Melith about his marriage plans.

The immigrations minister was enthusiastic.

"Wonderful, absolutely wonderful," he said. "I've known the Vley family for a long time. They're splendid people. And Janna is a girl any man would be proud of."

"Aren't there some formalities I should go through?" Goodman asked. "I mean being an alien and all —"

"None whatsoever. I've decided to dispense with the formalities. You can become a citizen of Tranai, if you wish, by merely stating your intention verbally. Or you can retain Terran citizenship, with no hard feelings. Or you can do both — be a citizen of Terra *and* Tranai. If Terra doesn't mind, we certainly don't."

"I think I'd like to become a citizen of Tranai," Goodman said.

"It's entirely up to you. But if you're thinking about the Presidency, you can retain Terran status and still hold office. We aren't at all stuffy about that sort of thing. One of our most successful Supreme Presidents was a lizard-evolved chap from Aquarella XI."

"What an enlightened attitude!"

"Sure, give everybody a chance, that's our motto. Now as to your marriage — any government employee can perform the ceremonies. Supreme President Borg would be happy to do it, this afternoon if you like." Melith winked. "The old codger likes to kiss the bride. But I think he's genuinely fond of you."

"This afternoon?" Goodman said. "Yes, I *would* like to be married this afternoon, if it's all right with Janna."

"It probably will be," Melith assured him. "Next, where are you going to live after the honeymoon? A hotel room is hardly suitable." He thought for a moment. "Tell you what — I've got a little house on the edge of town. Why don't you move in there, until you find something better? Or stay permanently, if you like it."

"Really," Goodman protested,



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"you're too generous —"

"Think nothing of it. Have you ever thought of becoming the next immigrations minister? You might like the work. No red tape, short hours, good pay — No? Got your eye on the Supreme Presidency, eh? Can't blame you, I suppose."

Melith dug in his pockets and found two keys. "This is for the front door and this is for the back. The address is stamped right on them. The place is fully equipped, including a brand-new derrsin field generator."

"A derrsin?"

"Certainly. No home on Tranai is complete without a derrsin stasis field generator."

CLEARING his throat, Goodman said carefully, "I've been meaning to ask you — exactly what is the stasis field used for?"

"Why, to keep one's wife in," Melith answered. "I thought you knew."

"I did," said Goodman. "But *why?*"

"Why?" Melith frowned. Apparently the question had never entered his head. "Why does one do anything? It's the custom, that's all. And very logical, too. You wouldn't want a woman chattering around you all the time, night and day."

Goodman blushed, because ever since he had met Janna, he had been thinking how pleasant it would be to have her around him all the time, night and day.

"It hardly seems fair to the women," Goodman pointed out.

Melith laughed. "My dear friend, are you preaching the doctrine of equality of the sexes? Really, it's a completely disproved theory. Men and women just aren't the same. They're different, no matter what you've been told on Terra. What's good for men isn't necessarily — or even usually — good for women."

"Therefore you treat them as inferiors," Goodman said, his reformer's blood beginning to boil.

"Not at all. We treat them in a *different* manner from men, but not in an *inferior* manner. Anyhow, they don't object."

"That's because they haven't been allowed to know any better. Is there any law that requires me to keep my wife in the derrsin field?"

"Of course not. The custom simply suggests that you keep her *out* of stasis for a certain minimum amount of time every week. No fair incarcerating the little woman, you know."

"Of course not," Goodman said sarcastically. "Must let her live *some* of the time."

"Exactly," Melith said, seeing no sarcasm in what Goodman said. "You'll catch on."



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Goodman stood up. "Is that all?"

"I guess that's about it. Good luck and all that."

"Thank you," Goodman said stiffly, turned sharply and left.

THAT afternoon, Supreme President Borg performed the simple Tranaian marriage rites at the National Mansion and afterward kissed the bride with zeal. It was a beautiful ceremony and was marred by only one thing.

Hanging on Borg's wall was a rifle, complete with telescopic sight and silencer. It was a twin to Melith's and just as inexplicable.

Borg took Goodman to one side and asked, "Have you given any further thought to the Supreme Presidency?"

"I'm still considering it," Goodman said. "I don't really want to hold public office —"

"No one does."

"— but there are certain reforms that Tranai needs badly. I think it may be my duty to bring them to the attention of the people."

"That's the spirit," Borg said approvingly. "We haven't had a really enterprising Supreme President for some time. Why don't you take office right now? Then you could have your honeymoon in the National Mansion with complete privacy."

Goodman was tempted. But he didn't want to be bothered by affairs of state on his honeymoon, which was all arranged anyhow. Since Tranai had lasted so long in its present near-utopian condition, it would undoubtedly keep for a few weeks more.

"I'll consider it when I come back," Goodman said.

Borg shrugged. "Well, I guess I can bear the burden a while longer. Oh, here." He handed Goodman a sealed envelope.

"What's this?"

"Just the standard advice," Borg said. "Hurry, your bride's waiting for you!"

"Come on, Marvin!" Janna called. "We don't want to be late for the spaceship."

Goodman hurried after her, into the spaceport limousine.

"Good luck!" her parents cried.

"Good luck!" Borg shouted.

"Good luck!" added Melith and his wife, and all the guests.

On the way to the spaceport, Goodman opened the envelope and read the printed sheet within:

ADVICE TO A NEW HUSBAND

*You have just been married and you expect, quite naturally, a lifetime of connubial bliss. This is perfectly proper, for a happy marriage is the foundation of*



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*good government. But you must do more than merely wish for it. Good marriage is not yours by divine right. A good marriage must be worked for!*

*Remember that your wife is a human being. She should be allowed a certain measure of freedom as her inalienable right. We suggest you take her out of stasis at least once a week. Too long in stasis is bad for her orientation. Too much stasis is bad for her complexion and this will be your loss as well as hers.*

*At intervals, such as vacations and holidays, it's customary to let your wife remain out of stasis for an entire day at a time, or even two or three days. It will do no harm and the novelty will do wonders for her state of mind.*

*Keep in mind these few common-sense rules and you can be assured of a happy marriage.*

—By the Government
Marriage Council

GOODMAN slowly tore the card into little bits, and let them drop to the floor of the limousine. His reforming spirit was now thoroughly aroused. He had known that Tranai was too good to be true. Someone had to pay for perfection. In this case, it was the women.

He had found the first serious flaw in paradise.

"What was that, dear?" Janna asked, looking at the bits of paper.

"That was some very foolish advice." Goodman said. "Dear, have you ever thought — really thought — about the marriage customs of this planet of yours?"

"I don't think I have. Aren't they all right?"

"They are wrong, completely wrong. They treat women like toys, like little dolls that one puts away when one is finished playing. Can't you see that?"

"I never thought about it."

"Well, you can think about it now," Goodman told her, "because some changes are going to be made and they're going to start in our home."

"Whatever you think best, darling," Janna said dutifully. She squeezed his arm. He kissed her.

And then the limousine reached the spaceport and they got aboard the ship.

Their honeymoon on Doé was like a brief sojourn in a flawless paradise. The wonders of Tranai's little moon had been built for lovers, and for lovers only. No businessman came to Doé for a quick rest; no predatory bachelor prowled the paths. The tired, the disillusioned, the lewdly hopeful all had to find other hunting grounds. The single rule on Doé, strictly enforced, was two by two, joyous and in love, and in



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no other state admitted.

This was one Tranaian custom that Goodman had no trouble appreciating.

On the little moon, there were meadows of tall grass and deep, green forests for walking and cool black lakes in the forests and jagged, spectacular mountains that begged to be climbed. Lovers were continually getting lost in the forests, to their great satisfaction; but not too lost, for one could circle the whole moon in a day. Thanks to the gentle gravity, no one could drown in the black lakes, and a fall from a mountaintop was frightening, but hardly dangerous.

There were, at strategic locations, little hotels with dimly lit cocktail lounges run by friendly, white-haired bartenders. There were gloomy caves which ran deep (but never too deep) into phosphorescent caverns glittering with ice, past sluggish underground rivers in which swam great luminous fish with fiery eyes.

The Government Marriage Council had considered these simple attractions sufficient and hadn't bothered putting in a golf course, swimming pool, horse track or shuffleboard court. It was felt that once a couple desired these things, the honeymoon was over.

Goodman and his bride spent an enchanted week on Doé and at last returned to Tranai.

AFTER carrying his bride across the threshold of their new home, Goodman's first act was to unplug the derrsin generator.

"My dear," he said, "up to now, I have followed all the customs of Tranai, even when they seemed ridiculous to me. But this is one thing I will not sanction. On Terra, I was the founder of the Committee for Equal Job Opportunities for Women. On Terra, we treat our women as equals, as companions, as partners in the adventure of life."

"What a strange concept," Janna said, a frown clouding her pretty face.

"Think about it," Goodman urged. "Our life will be far more satisfying in this companionable manner than if I shut you up in the purdah of the derrsin field. Don't you agree?"

"You know far more than I, dear. You've traveled all over the Galaxy, and I've never been out of Port Tranai. If you say it's the best way, then it must be."

Past a doubt, Goodman thought, she was the most perfect of women.

He returned to his work at the Abbag Home Robot Works and was soon deep in another disimprovement project. This time, he



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conceived the bright idea of making the robot's joints squeak and grind. The noise would increase the robot's irritation value, thereby making its destruction more pleasing and psychologically more valuable. Mr. Abbag was overjoyed with the idea, gave him another pay raise, and asked him to have the disimprovement ready for early production.

Goodman's first plan was simply to remove some of the lubrication ducts. But he found that friction would then wear out vital parts too soon. That naturally could not be sanctioned.

He began to draw up plans for a built-in squeak-and-grind unit. It had to be absolutely lifelike and yet cause no real wear. It had to be inexpensive and it had to be small, because the robot's interior was already packed with disimprovements.

But Goodman found that small squeak-producing units sounded artificial. Larger units were too costly to manufacture or couldn't be fitted inside the robot's case. He began working several evenings a week, lost weight, and his temper grew edgy.

JANNA became a good, dependable wife. His meals were always ready on time and she invariably had a cheerful word for him in the evenings and a sympathetic ear for his difficulties. During the day, she supervised the cleaning of the house by the Home Robots. This took less than an hour and afterward she read books, baked pies, knitted, and destroyed robots.

Goodman was a little alarmed at this, because Janna destroyed them at the rate of three or four a week. Still, everyone had to have a hobby. He could afford to indulge her, since he got the machines at cost.

Goodman had reached a complete impasse when another designer, a man named Dath Hergo, came up with a novel control. This was based upon a countergyroscopic principle and allowed a robot to enter a room at a ten-degree list. (Ten degrees, the research department said, was the most irritating angle of list a robot could assume.) Moreover, by employing a random selection principle, the robot would *lurch*, drunkenly, annoyingly, at irregular intervals — never dropping anything, but always on the verge of it.

This development was, quite naturally, hailed as a great advance in disimprovement engineering. And Goodman found that he could center his built-in squeak-and-grind unit right in the lurch control. His name was mentioned in the engineering journals next to that of Dath Hergo.



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The new line of Abbag Home Robots was a sensation.

At this time, Goodman decided to take a leave of absence from his job and assume the Supreme Presidency of Tranai. He felt he owed it to the people. If Terran ingenuity and know-how could bring out improvements in disimprovements, they would do even better improving improvements. Tranai was a near-utopia. With his hand on the reins, they could go the rest of the way to perfection.

He went down to Melith's office to talk it over.

"I suppose there's always room for change," Melith said thoughtfully. The immigration chief was seated by the window, idly watching people pass by. "Of course, our present system has been working for quite some time and working very well. I don't know what you'd improve. There's no crime, for example —"

"Because you've legalized it," Goodman declared. "You've simply evaded the issue."

"We don't see it that way. There's no poverty —"

"Because everybody steals. And there's no trouble with old people because the government turns them into beggars. Really, there's plenty of room for change and improvement."

"Well, perhaps," Melith said. "But I think —" he stopped suddenly, rushed over to the wall and pulled down the rifle. "There he is!"

GOODMAN looked out the window. A man, apparently no different from anyone else, was walking past. He heard a muffled click and saw the man stagger, then drop to the pavement.

Melith had shot him with the silenced rifle.

"What did you do that for?" Goodman gasped.

"Potential murderer," Melith said.

"What?"

"Of course. We don't have any out-and-out crime here, but, being human, we have to deal with the potentiality."

"What did he do to make him a potential murderer?"

"Killed five people," Melith stated.

"But — damn it, man, this isn't fair! You didn't arrest him, give him a trial, the benefit of counsel —"

"How could I?" Melith asked, slightly annoyed. "We don't have any police to arrest people with and we don't have any legal system. Good Lord, you didn't expect me to just let him go on, did you? Our definition of a murderer is a killer of ten and he was well on his way. I couldn't just sit idly by. It's my duty to



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protect the people. I can assure you, I made careful inquiries."

"It isn't just!" Goodman shouted.

"Who ever said it was?" Melith shouted back. "What has *justice* got to do with utopia?"

"Everything!" Goodman had calmed himself with an effort. "Justice is the basis of human dignity, human desire —"

"Now you're just using words," Melith said, with his usual good-natured smile. "Try to be realistic. We have created a utopia for *human beings,* not for saints who don't need one. We must accept the deficiencies of the human character, not pretend they don't exist. To our way of thinking, a police apparatus and a legal-judicial system all tend to create an atmosphere for crime and an acceptance of crime. It's better, believe me, not to accept the possibility of crime at all. The vast majority of the people will go along with you."

"But when crime does turn up, as it inevitably does —"

"Only the potentiality turns up," Melith insisted stubbornly. "And even that is much rarer than you would think. When it shows up, we deal with it, quickly and simply."

"Suppose you get the wrong man?"

"We can't get the wrong man. Not a chance of it."

"Why not?"

"Because," Melith said, "anyone disposed of by a government official is, by definition and by unwritten law, a potential criminal."

MARVIN Goodman was silent for a while. Then he said, "I see that the government has more power than I thought at first."

"It does," Melith said. "But not as much as you now imagine."

Goodman smiled ironically. "And is the Supreme Presidency still mine for the asking?"

"Of course. And with no strings attached. Do you want it?"

Goodman thought deeply for a moment. Did he really want it? Well, someone had to rule. Someone had to protect the people. Someone had to make a few reforms in this utopian madhouse.

"Yes, I want it," Goodman said.

The door burst open and Supreme President Borg rushed in. "Wonderful! Perfectly wonderful! You can move into the National Mansion today. I've been packed for a week, waiting for you to make up your mind."

"There must be certain formalities to go through —"

"No formalities," Borg said, his face shining with perspiration. "None whatsoever. All we do is hand over the Presidential Seal;



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then I'll go down and take my name off the rolls and put yours on."

Goodman looked at Melith. The immigration minister's round face was expressionless.

"All right," Goodman said.

threw it over Borg's head. Goodman backed to a chair and fell into it. His mouth opened, but no words came out.

"It's really a pity," Melith said. "He was so near the end of his term. I warned him against

Borg reached for the Presidential Seal, started to remove it from his neck —

It exploded suddenly and violently.

Goodman found himself staring in horror at Borg's red, ruined head. The Supreme President tottered for a moment, then slid to the floor.

Melith took off his jacket and

licensing that new spaceport. The citizens won't approve, I told him. But he was sure they would like to have two spaceports. Well, he was wrong."

"Do you mean — I mean — how — what —"

"All government officials," Melith explained, "wear the badge of office, which contains a traditional amount of tessium, an ex-



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plosive you may have heard of. The charge is radio-controlled from the Citizens Booth. Any citizen has access to the Booth, for the purpose of expressing his disapproval of the government." Melith sighed. "This will go

down as a permanent black mark against poor Borg's record."

"YOU LET the people express their disapproval by blowing up officials?" Goodman croaked, appalled.

"It's the only way that means anything," said Melith. "Check and balance. Just as the people are in our hands, so we are in the people's hands."

"And *that's* why he wanted me to take over his term. Why didn't anyone tell me?"

"You didn't ask," Melith said, with the suspicion of a smile. "Don't look so horrified. Assassination is always possible, you know, on any planet, under any government. We try to make it a constructive thing. Under this system, the people never lose touch with the government, and the government never tries to assume dictatorial powers. And, since everyone knows he can turn to the Citizens Booth, you'd be surprised how sparingly it's used. Of course, there are always hotheads —"

Goodman got to his feet and started to the door, not looking at Borg's body.

"Don't you still want the Presidency?" asked Melith.

"No!"

"That's so like you Terrans," Melith remarked sadly. "You want responsibility only if it doesn't incur risk. That's the wrong attitude for running a government."

"You may be right," Goodman said. "I'm just glad I found out in time."

He hurried home.

His mind was in a complete turmoil when he entered his house. Was Tranai a utopia or a planetwide insane asylum? Was



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there much difference? For the first time in his life, Goodman was wondering if utopia was worth having. Wasn't it better to strive for perfection than to possess it? To have ideals rather than to live by them? If justice was a fallacy, wasn't the fallacy better than the truth?

Or was it? Goodman was a sadly confused young man when he shuffled into his house and found his wife in the arms of another man.

THE SCENE had a terrible slow-motion clarity in his eyes. It seemed to take Janna forever to rise to her feet, straighten her disarranged clothing and stare at him open-mouthed. The man — a tall, good-looking fellow whom Goodman had never before seen — appeared too startled to speak. He made small, aimless gestures, brushing the lapel of his jacket, pulling down his cuffs.

Then, tentatively, the man smiled.

"Well!" Goodman said. It was feeble enough, under the circumstances, but it had its effect. Janna started to cry.

"Terribly sorry," the man murmured. "Didn't expect you home for hours. This must come as a shock to you. I'm terribly sorry."

The one thing Goodman hadn't expected or wanted was sympathy from his wife's lover. He ignored the man and stared at the weeping Janna.

"Well, what did you expect?" Janna screamed at him suddenly. "I had to! You didn't love me!"

"Didn't love you! How can you say that?"

"Because of the way you treated me."

"I loved you very much, Janna," he said softly.

"You didn't!" she shrilled, throwing back her head. "Just look at the way you treated me. You kept me around all day, every day, doing *housework, cooking, sitting.* Marvin, I could *feel* myself aging. Day after day, the same weary, stupid routine. And most of the time, when you came home, you were too tired to even notice me. All you could talk about was your stupid robots! I was being wasted, Marvin, *wasted!*"

It suddenly occurred to Goodman that his wife was unhinged. Very gently he said, "But, Janna, that's how life is. A husband and wife settle into a companionable situation. They age together side by side. It can't all be high spots —"

"But of course it can! Try to understand, Marvin. It can, on Tranai — for a woman!"

"It's impossible," Goodman said.

"On Tranai, a woman expects



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a life of enjoyment and pleasure. It's her right, just as men have their rights. She expects to come out of stasis and find a little party prepared, or a walk in the moonlight, or a swim, or a movie." She began to cry again. "But *you* were so smart. *You* had to change it. I should have known better than to trust a Terran."

The other man sighed and lighted a cigarette.

"I know you can't help being an alien, Marvin," Janna said. "But I do want you to understand. Love isn't everything. A woman must be practical, too. The way things were going, I would have been an old woman while all my friends were still young."

"STILL YOUNG?" Goodman repeated blankly.

"Of course," the man said. "A woman doesn't age in the derrsin field."

"But the whole thing is ghastly," said Goodman. "My wife would still be a young woman when I was old."

"That's just when you'd appreciate a young woman," Janna said.

"But how about you?" Goodman asked. "Would you appreciate an old man?"

"He still doesn't understand," the man said.

"Marvin, *try*. Isn't it clear yet? Throughout your life, you would have a young and beautiful woman whose only desire would be to please you. And when you died — don't look shocked, dear; everybody dies — when you died, I would still be young, and by law I'd inherit all your money."

"I'm beginning to see," Goodman said. "I suppose that's another accepted phase of Tranaian life — the wealthy young widow who can pursue her own pleasures."

"Naturally. In this way, everything is for the best for everybody. The man has a young wife whom he sees only when he wishes. He has his complete freedom and a nice home as well. The woman is relieved of all the dullness of ordinary living and, while she can still enjoy it, is well provided for."

"You should have told me," Goodman complained.

"I thought you knew," Janna said, "since you thought you had a better way. But I can see that you would never have understood, because you're so naive — though I must admit it's one of your charms." She smiled wistfully. "Besides, if I told you, I would never have met Rondo."

The man bowed slightly. "I was leaving samples of Greah's Confections. You can imagine my surprise when I found this lovely



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young woman *out of stasis.* I mean it was like a storybook tale come true. One never expects old legends to happen, so you must admit that there's a certain appeal when they do."

"Do you love him?" Goodman asked heavily.

"Yes," said Janna. "Rondo cares for me. He's going to keep me in stasis long enough to make up for the time I've lost. It's a sacrifice on his part, but Rondo has a generous nature."

"If that's how it is," Goodman said glumly, "I certainly won't stand in your way. I am a civilized being, after all. You may have a divorce."

HE FOLDED his arms across his chest, feeling quite noble. But he was dimly aware that his decision stemmed not so much from nobility as from a sudden, violent distaste for all things Tranaian.

"We have no divorce on Tranai," Rondo said.

"No?" Goodman felt a cold chill run down his spine.

A blaster appeared in Rondo's hand. "It would be too unsettling, you know, if people were always swapping around. There's only one way to change a marital status."

"But this is revolting!" Goodman blurted, backing away. "It's against all decency!"

"Not if the wife desires it. And that, by the by, is another excellent reason for keeping one's spouse in stasis. Have I your permission, my dear?"

"Forgive me, Marvin," Janna said. She closed her eyes. "Yes!"

Rondo leveled the blaster. Without a moment's hesitation, Goodman dived head-first out the nearest window. Rondo's shot fanned right over him.

"See here!" Rondo called. "Show some spirit, man. Stand up to it!"

Goodman had landed heavily on his shoulder. He was up at once, sprinting, and Rondo's second shot scorched his arm. Then he ducked behind a house and was momentarily safe. He didn't stop to think about it. Running for all he was worth, he headed for the spaceport.

Fortunately, a ship was preparing for blastoff and took him to g'Moree. From there he wired to Tranai for his funds and bought passage to Higastomeritreia, where the authorities accused him of being a Ding spy. The charge couldn't stick, since the Dingans were an amphibious race, and Goodman almost drowned proving to everyone's satisfaction that he could breathe only air.

A drone transport took him to the double planet Mvanti, past Seves, Olgo and Mi. He hired a



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bush pilot to take him to Bellismoranti, where the influence of Terra began. From there, a local spaceline transported him past the Galactic Whirl and, after stopping at Oyster, Lekung, Pankang, Inchang and Machang, arrived at Tung-Bradar IV.

His money was now gone, but he was practically next door to Terra, as astronomical distances go. He was able to work his passage to Oumé, and from Oumé to Legis II. There the Interstellar Travelers Aid Society arranged a berth for him and at last he arrived back on Earth.

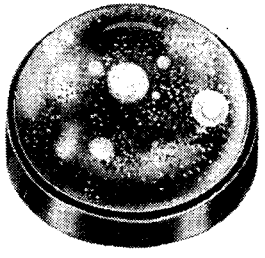
GOODMAN has settled down in Seakirk, New Jersey, where a man is perfectly safe as long as he pays his taxes. He holds the post of Chief Robotic Technician for the Seakirk Construction Corporation and has married a small, dark, quiet girl, who obviously adores him, although he rarely lets her out of the house.

He and old Captain Savage go frequently to Eddie's Moonlight Bar, drink Tranai Specials, and talk of Tranai the Blessed, where The Way has been found and Man is no longer bound to The Wheel. On such occasions, Goodman complains of a touch of space malaria — because of it, he can never go back into space, can never return to Tranai.

There is always an admiring audience on these nights.

Goodman has recently organized, with Captain Savage's help, the Seakirk League to Take the Vote from Women. They are its only members, but as Goodman puts it, when did that ever stop a crusader?

—ROBERT SHECKLEY

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# The Discovery of Morniel Mathaway

By WILLIAM TENN

***Let posterity be the judge, eh? And come up with a mess of an odd tangle like this?***

EVERYONE is astonished at the change in Morniel Mathaway since he was discovered, everyone but me. They remember him as an unbathed and untalented Greenwich Village painter who began almost every second sentence with "I" and ended every third one with "me." He had all the pushing, half-frightened conceit of the man who secretly suspects himself to be a second-rater or worse, and any half-hour conversation with him made your ears droop with the boastful yells he threw at them.

I understand the change in

Illustrated by SMITH



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him, the soft-spoken self-depreciation as well as the sudden overwhelming success. But then, I was there the day he was "discovered" — except that isn't the right way to put it. To tell you the truth, I don't know how to put it, really, considering the absolute impossibility — yes, I said *impossibility,* not improbability — of the whole business. All I know for sure is that trying to make sense out of it gives me belly-yammers and the biggest headache this side of calculus.

We were talking about his discovery that day. I was sitting, carefully balanced, on the one wooden chair in his cold little Bleecker Street studio, because I was too sophisticated to sit in the easy chair.

Morniel practically paid the rent on his studio with that easy chair. It was a broken-down tangle of filthy upholstery that was high in the front of the seat and very low in the back. When you sat in it, things began sliding out of your pockets — loose change, keys, wallets, anything — and into the jungle of rusty springs and rotting woodwork below.

Whenever newcomers came to the place, Morniel would make a big fuss about showing them to "the *comfortable* chair." And as they twisted about painfully trying to find a spot between the springs, his eyes would gleam and he'd get all lit up with good cheer. Because the more they moved about, the more would fall out of their pockets.

After a party, he'd take the chair apart and start counting the receipts, like a store owner hitting the cash register the evening after a fire sale.

The only trouble was, to sit in the wooden chair, you had to concentrate, since it teetered.

Morniel couldn't lose — he always sat on the bed.

"I CAN'T WAIT for the day," he was saying, "when some dealer, some critic, with an ounce of brain in his head sees my work. I can't miss, Dave, I know I can't miss; I'm just too good. Sometimes I get frightened at how good I am — it's almost too much talent for one man."

"Well," I said, "there's always the —"

"Not that it's too much talent for me," he went on, fearful that I might have misunderstood him. "I'm big enough to carry it, fortunately; I'm large enough of soul. But another, lesser guy would be destroyed by this much totality of perception, this comprehension of the spiritual *gestalt,* as I like to put it. His mind would just crack wide open under the load. Not me, though, Dave, not me."



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"Good," I said. "Glad to hear it. Now if you don't m —"

"Do you know what I was thinking about this morning?"

"No," I said. "But, to tell you the truth, I don't really —"

"I was thinking about Picasso, Dave. Picasso and Roualt. I'd just gone for a walk through the pushcart area to have my breakfast—you know, the old the-hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye Morniel — and I started to think about the state of modern painting. I think about that a lot, Dave. It troubles me."

"You do?" I said. "Well, *I* tend to —"

"I walked down Bleecker Street, then I swung into Washington Square Park, and while I walked, I was thinking: Who is doing really important work in painting today who is really and unquestionably great? I could think of only three names: Picasso, Roualt — and me. There's nobody else doing anything worthwhile and original nowadays. Just three names out of the whole host of people painting all over the world at this moment: just three names, no more. It made me feel very lonely, Dave."

"I can see that," I said. "But then, you —"

"And then I asked myself, why is this so? Has absolute genius always been so rare, is there an essential statistical limitation on it in every period, or is there another reason, peculiar to our own time? And why has my impending discovery been delayed so long? I thought about it for a long time, Dave. I thought about it humbly, carefully, because it's an important question. And this is the answer I came up with."

I gave up. I just sat back in my chair — not too far back, of course — and listened to him expound a theory of esthetics I'd heard at least a dozen times before, from a dozen other painters in the Village. The only point of difference between them was on the question of exactly who was the culmination and the most perfect living example of this esthetic. Morniel, you will probably not be amazed to learn, felt it was himself.

HE'D COME to New York from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a tall, awkward boy who didn't like to shave and believed he could paint. In those days, he admired Gauguin and tried to imitate him on canvas; he'd talk for hours, in the accents that sound like movie Brooklynese, but are actually pure Pittsburgh, about the *mystique* of folk simplicity.

He got off the Gauguin kick fast, once he'd taken a few courses at the Art Students



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League and grown his first straggly blond beard. Recently, he had developed his own technique which he called smudge-on-smudge.

He was bad, and there were no two ways about it. I say that not only from my opinion — and I've roomed with two modern painters and been married for a year to another — but from the opinions of pretty knowing people who, having no personal axe to grind, looked his work over carefully.

One of them, a fine critic of modern art, said after staring slack-jawed at a painting which Morniel had insisted on giving me and which, in spite of my protests, he had personally hung over my fireplace: "It's not just that he doesn't say anything of any significance, graphically, but he doesn't even set himself what you might call *painterly* problems. White-on-white, smudge-on-smudge, non-objectivism, neo-abstractionism, call it what you like, there's nothing there, nothing! He's just another of these loud-mouth, frowzy, frustrated dilettantes that infest the Village."

So why did I spend time with Morniel? Well, he lived right around the corner. He was slightly colorful, in his own sick way. And when I'd sat up all night, trying to work on a poem that simply wouldn't be worked, I often felt it would be relaxing to drift around to his studio for a spot of conversation that wouldn't have anything to do with literature.

The only trouble — and the thing I always forgot — was that it almost never was a conversation. It was a monologue that I barely managed to break in on from time to time.

You see, the difference between us was that I'd been published, even if it was only in badly printed experimental magazines that paid off in subscriptions. He'd never been exhibited — not once.

THERE WAS another reason for my maintaining a friendly relationship with the man. And that had to do with the one talent he really had.

I barely get by, so far as living expenses are concerned. Things like good paper to write on, fine books for my library, are stuff I yearn for all the time, but are way out of my reach financially. When the yearning gets too great — for a newly published collection by Wallace Stevens, for example — I meander over to Morniel's and tell him about it.

Then we go out to the bookstore — entering it separately. I start a conversation with the proprietor about some very expensive, out-of-print item that I'm



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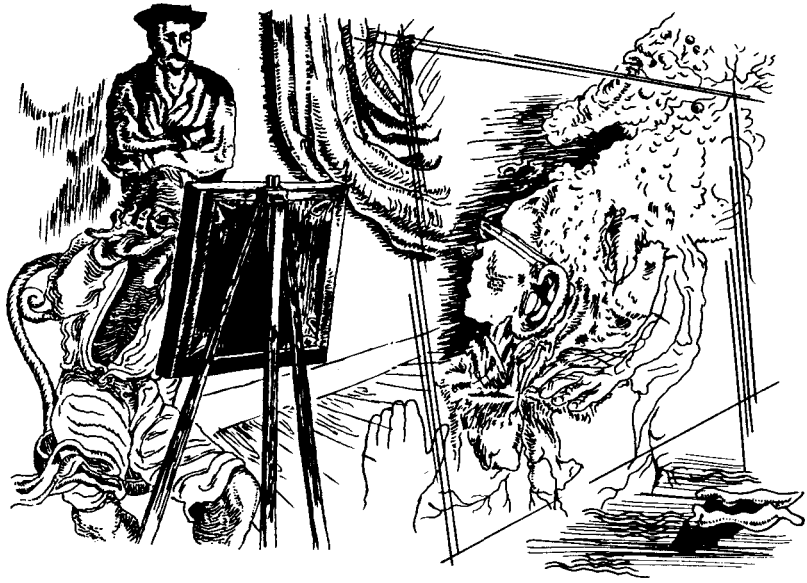
thinking of ordering and, once I've got all of his attention, Morniel snaffles the Stevens — which I intend to pay for, of course, as soon as I'm a little ahead.

He's absolutely wonderful at it. I've never seen him so much as suspected, let alone caught. Of course, I have to pay for the

it's not worth is the thumping boredom I have to suffer through in listening to the guy, or my conscience bothering me because I know he never intends to pay for those things. Okay, so I will, when I can.

"I can't be as unique as I feel I am," he was saying now. "Other people must be born with the



favor by going through the same routine in an art-supply store, so that Morniel can replenish his stock of canvas, paint and brushes, but it's worth it to me in the long run. The only thing

potential of such great talent, but it's destroyed in them before they can reach artistic maturity. Why? How? Well, let's examine the role that society —"

And that's exactly when I first



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saw it. Just as he got to the word "society," I saw this purplish ripple in the wall opposite me, the strange, shimmering outline of a box with a strange, shimmering outline of a man inside the box. It was about five feet off the floor and it looked like colored heat waves. Then there was nothing on the wall.

But it was too late in the year for heat waves. And I've never had optical illusions. It could be, I decided, that I had seen the beginnings of a new crack in Morniel's wall. The place wasn't really a studio, just a drafty cold-water flat that some old occupant had cleared so as to make one long room. It was on the top floor and the roof leaked occasionally; the walls were covered with thick, wavy lines in memory of the paths followed by the trickling water.

But why purple? And why the outline of a man inside a box? That was pretty tricky, for a simple crack in the wall. And where had it gone?

"— the eternal conflict with the individual who insists on his individuality," Morniel pointed out. "Not to mention —"

A SERIES OF high musical notes sounded, one after the other, rapidly. And then, in the center of the room, about two feet above the floor this time, the purple lines reappeared — still hazy, still transparent and still with the outline of a man inside.

Morniel swung his feet off the bed and stared up at it. "What the —" he began.

Once more, the outfit disappeared.

"W-what —" Morniel stuttered. "What's going *on?*"

"I don't know," I told him. "But whatever it is, I'd say they're slowly zeroing in."

Again those high musical notes. And the purple box came into view with its bottom resting on the floor. It got darker, darker and more substantial. The notes kept climbing up the scale and getting fainter and fainter until, when the box was no longer transparent, they faded away altogether.

A door slid back in the box. A man stepped out, wearing clothing that seemed to end everywhere in curlicues.

He looked first at me, then at Morniel.

"Morniel Mathaway?" he inquired.

"Ye-es," Morniel said, backing away toward his refrigerator.

"Morniel Mathaway," the man from the box said, "my name is Glescu. I bring you greetings from 2487 A.D."

Neither of us could think of a topper for that one, so we let



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it lie there. I got up and stood beside Morniel, feeling obscurely that I wanted to get as close as possible to something I was familiar with.

And we all held that position for a while. Tableau.

2487 A.D., I thought to myself. I'd never seen anyone dressed like that. Even more, I'd never *imagined* anyone dressed like that and my imagination can run pretty wild. The clothing was not exactly transparent and yet not quite opaque. Prismatic is the word for it, different colors that constantly chased themselves in and out and around the curlicues. There seemed to be a pattern to it, but nothing that my eyes could hold down and identify.

And the man himself, this Mr. Glescu, was about the same height as Morniel and me and he seemed to be not very much older. But there was a something about him — I don't know, call it *quality*, true and tremendous *quality* — that would have cowed the Duke of Wellington. Civilized, maybe that's the word: he was the most civilized-looking man I'd ever seen.

He stepped forward. "We will now," he said in a rich, wonderfully resonant voice, "indulge in the twentieth-century custom of shaking hands."

So we indulged in the twentieth-century custom of shaking hands with him. First Morniel, then me — and both very gingerly. Mr. Glescu shook hands with a peculiar awkwardness that made me think of the way an Iowan farmer might eat with chopsticks for the first time.

The ceremony over, he stood there and beamed at us. Or, rather, at Morniel.

"What a moment, eh?" he said. "What a supreme moment!"

MORNIEL took a deep breath and I knew that all those years of meeting process servers unexpectedly on the stairs had begun to pay off. He was recovering; his mind was beginning to work again.

"How do you mean 'what a moment'?" he asked. "What's so special about it? Are you the — the inventor of time travel?"

Mr. Glescu twinkled with laughter. "*Me?* An *inventor?* Oh, no. No, no! Time travel was invented by Antoinette Ingeborg in — but that was after your time. Hardly worth going into at the moment, especially since I only have half an hour."

"Why half an hour?" I asked, not so much because I was curious as because it seemed like a good question.

"The skindrom can only be maintained that long," he elucidated. "The skindrom is — well, call it the transmitting device



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that enables me to appear in your period. There is such an enormous expenditure of power required that a trip into the past is made only once every fifty years. The privilege is awarded as a sort of Gobel. I hope I have the word right. It *is* Gobel, isn't it? The award made in your time?"

I had a flash. "You wouldn't mean *Nobel,* by any chance? The Nobel Prize?"

He nodded his head enthusiastically. "That's it! The Nobel Prize. The trip is awarded to outstanding scholars as a kind of Nobel Prize. Once every fifty years — the man selected by the gardunax as the most pre-eminent — that sort of thing. Up to now, of course, it's always gone to historians and they've frittered it away on the Siege of Troy, the first atom-bomb explosion at Los Alamos, the discovery of America — things like that. But *this* year —"

"Yes?" Morniel broke in, his voice quavering. We were both suddenly remembering that Mr. Glescu had known his name. "What kind of scholar are you?"

Mr. Glescu made us a slight bow with his head, "I am an art scholar. My specialty is art history. And my special field in art history is . . ."

"*What?*" Morniel demanded, his voice no longer quavering, but positively screechy. "What is your special field?"

Again a slight bow from Mr. Glescu's head. "You, Mr. Mathaway. In my own period, I may say without much fear of contradiction, I am the greatest living authority on the life and works of Morniel Mathaway. My special field is you."

Morniel went white. He groped his way to the bed and sat down as if his hips were made of glass. He opened his mouth several times and couldn't seem to get a sound out. Finally, he gulped, clenched his fists and got a grip on himself.

"Do — do you mean," he managed to croak at last, "that I'm famous? *That* famous?"

"Famous? You, my dear sir, are beyond fame. You are one of the immortals the human race has produced. As I put it — rather well if I may say so — in my last book, *Mathaway, the Man Who Shaped the Future*: 'How rarely has it fallen to the lot of individual human endeavor to —' "

"That famous." The blond beard worked the way a child's face does when it's about to cry. "*That* famous!"

"THAT famous!" Mr. Glescu assured him. "Who is the man with whom modern painting, in its full glory, is said to have



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definitely begun? Who is the man whose designs and special manipulations of color have dominated architecture for the past five centuries, who is responsible for the arrangement of our cities, the shape of our every artifact, the very texture of our clothing."

"Me?" Morniel inquired weakly.

"You! No other man in the history of art has exerted such a massive influence over design or over so wide an area of art for so long a period of time. To whom can I compare you, sir? To what other artist in history can I compare you?"

"Rembrandt?" Morniel suggested. He seemed to be trying to be helpful. "Da Vinci?"

Mr. Glescu sneered. "Rembrandt and Da Vinci in the same breath as you? Ridiculous! They lacked your universality, your taste for the cosmic, your sense of the all-encompassing. No, to relate you properly to an equal, one must go outside painting, to literature, possibly. Shakespeare, with his vast breadth of understanding, with the resounding organ notes of his poetry and with his tremendous influence on the later English language — but even Shakespeare, I'm afraid, even Shakespeare —" He shook his head sadly.

"Wow!" breathed Morniel Mathaway.

"Speaking of Shakespeare," I broke in, "do you happen to know of a poet named David Dantziger? Did much of his work survive?"

"Is that you?"

"Yes," I told the man from 2487 A.D. eagerly. "That's me, Dave Dantziger."

He wrinkled his forehead. "I don't seem to remember any — What school of poetry do you belong to?"

"Well, they call it by various names. Anti-imagist is the most usual one. Anti-imagist or post-imagist."

"No," said Mr. Glescu after thinking for a while. "The only poet I can remember for this time and this part of the world is Peter Tedd."

"Who is Peter Tedd? Never heard of him."

"Then this must be before he was discovered. But please remember, I am an art scholar, not a literary one. It is entirely possible," he went on soothingly, "that were you to mention your name to a specialist in the field of minor twentieth-century versifiers, he could place you with a minimum of difficulty. Entirely possible."

I glanced at Morniel, and he was grinning at me from the bed. He had entirely recovered by now and was beginning to soak the situation in through his pores.



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The whole situation. His standing. Mine.

I decided I hated every single one of his guts.

WHY DID it have to be someone like Morniel Mathaway that got that kind of nod from fate? There were so many painters who were decent human beings, and yet this bragging slug . . .

And all the time, a big part of my mind was wandering around in circles. It just proved, I kept saying to myself, that you need the perspective of history to properly evaluate anything in art. You think of all the men who were big guns in their time and today are forgotten — that contemporary of Beethoven's, for example, who, while he was alive, was considered much the greater man, and whose name is known today only to musicologists. But still —

Mr. Glescu glanced at the forefinger of his right hand where a little black dot constantly expanded and contracted. "My time is getting short," he said. "And while it is an ineffable, overwhelming delight for me to be standing in your studio, Mr. Mathaway, and looking at you at last in the flesh, I wonder if you would mind obliging me with a small favor?"

"Sure," Morniel nodded, getting up. "You name it. Nothing's too good for you. What do you want?"

Mr. Glescu swallowed as if he were about to bring himself to knock on the gates of Paradise. "I wonder — I'm sure you don't mind — could you possibly let me look at the painting you're working on at the moment? The idea of seeing a Mathaway in an unfinished state, with the paint still wet upon it —" He shut his eyes, as if he couldn't believe that all this were really happening to him.

Morniel gestured urbanely and strode to his easel. He pulled the tarp off. "I intend to call this —" and his voice had grown as oily as the subsoil of Texas — *"Figured Figurines No.* 29."

Slowly, tastingly, Mr. Glescu opened his eyes and leaned forward. "But —" he said, after a long silence. "Surely this isn't *your* work, Mr. Mathaway?"

Morniel turned around in surprise and considered the painting. "It's my work, all right. *Figured Figurines No.* 29. Recognize it?"

"No," said Mr. Glescu. "I do not recognize it. And that is a fact for which I am extremely grateful. Could I see something else, please? Something a little later?"

"That's the latest," Morniel told him a little uncertainly. "Everything else is earlier. Here,



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you might like this." He pulled a painting out of the rack. "I call this *Figured Figurines No.* 22. I think it's the best of my early period."

MR. GLESCU shuddered. "It looks like smears of paint on top of other smears of paint."

"Right! Only I call it smudge-on-smudge. But you probably know all that, being such an authority on me. And here's *Figured Figurines No.* —"

"Do you mind leaving these — these figurines, Mr. Mathaway?" Glescu begged. "I'd like to see something of yours with color. With color and with form!"

Morniel scratched his head. "I haven't done any real color work for a long time. Oh, wait!" He brightened and began to search in the back of the rack. He came out with an old canvas. "This is one of the few examples of my mauve-and-mottled period that I've kept."

"I can't imagine why," Mr. Glescu murmured, mostly to himself. "It's positively —" He brought his shoulders up to his ears in the kind of shrug that anyone who's ever seen an art critic in action can immediately recognize. You don't need words after that shrug; if you're a painter whose work he's looking at, you don't *want* words.

About this time, Morniel began pulling paintings out frantically. He'd show them to Glescu, who would gurgle as if he were forcing down a retch, and pull out some more paintings.

"I don't understand it," Mr. Glescu said, staring at the floor, which was strewn with canvases tacked to their wooden stretchers. "This was obviously before you discovered yourself and your true technique. But I'm looking for a sign, a *hint,* of the genius that is to come. And I find —" He shook his head dazedly.

"How about this one?" Morniel asked, breathing hard.

Mr. Glescu shoved at it with both hands. "Please take it *away!*" He looked at his forefinger again. I noticed the black dot was expanding and contracting much more slowly. "I'll have to leave soon," he said. "And I don't understand at all. Let me show you something, gentlemen."

HE WALKED into the purple box and came out with a book. He beckoned to us. Morniel and I moved around behind him and stared over his shoulder. The pages tinkled peculiarly as they were turned; one thing I knew for sure — they weren't made out of paper. And the title-page . . .

*The Complete Paintings of Morniel Mathaway,* 1928-1996.

"Were you born in 1928?" I demanded.



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Morniel nodded. "May 23, 1928." And he was silent. I knew what he was thinking about and did a little quick figuring. Sixty-eight years. It's not given to many men to know exactly how much time they have. Sixty-eight years — that wasn't so bad.

Mr. Glescu turned to the first of the paintings.

Even now, when I remember my initial sight of it, my knees get weak and bend inward. It was an abstraction in full color, but such an abstraction as I'd never imagined before. As if all the work of all the abstractionists up to this point had been an appenticeship on the kindergarten level.

You had to like it — so long as you had eyes — whether or not your appreciation had been limited to representational painting until now; even if, in fact, you'd never particularly cared about painting of *any* school.

I don't want to sound maudlin, but I actually felt tears in my eyes. Anyone who was at all sensitive to beauty would have reacted the same way.

Not Morniel, though. "Oh, *that* kind of stuff," he said as if a great light had broken on him. "Why didn't you tell me you wanted *that* kind of stuff?"

Mr. Glescu clutched at Morniel's dirty tee-shirt. "Do you mean you have paintings like this, too?"

"Not paintings — *painting*. Just one. I did it last week as a sort of experiment, but I wasn't satisfied with the way it turned out, so I gave it to the girl downstairs. Care to take a look at it?"

"Oh, yes! Very, very much!"

Morniel reached for the book and tossed it casually on the bed. "Okay," he said. "Come on. It won't take more than a minute or two."

AS WE trooped downstairs, I found myself boiling with perplexity. One thing I was sure of — as sure as of the fact that Geoffrey Chaucer had lived before Algernon Swinburne — nothing that Morniel had ever done or had the capacity of ever doing could come within a million esthetic miles of the reproduction in that book. And for all of his boasting, for all of his seemingly inexhaustible conceit, I was certain that he also knew it.

He stopped before a door two floors below and rapped on it. There was no answer. He waited a few seconds and knocked again. Still no answer.

"Damn," he said. "She isn't home. And I did want you to see that one."

"I *want* to see it," Mr. Glescu told him earnestly. "I want to see anything that looks like your



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mature work. But time is growing so short —"

Morniel snapped his fingers. "Tell you what. Anita has a couple of cats she asks me to feed whenever she's away for a while, so she's given me a key to her apartment. Suppose I whip upstairs and get it?"

"Fine!" Mr. Glescu said happily, taking a quick look at his forefinger. "But please hurry."

"Will do." And then, as Morniel turned to go up the stairs, he caught my eye. And he gave me the signal, the one we use whenever we go "shopping." It meant: "Talk to the man. Keep him interested."

I got it. The book. I'd seen Morniel in action far too many times not to remember that casual gesture of tossing it on the bed as anything but a casual gesture. He'd just put it where he could find it when he wanted it — fast. He was going upstairs to hide it in some unlikely spot and when Mr. Glescu had to take off for his own time — well, the book would just not be available.

Smooth? Very pretty damned smooth, I'd say. And Morniel Mathaway would paint the paintings of Morniel Mathaway. Only he wouldn't paint them.

He'd *copy* them.

Meanwhile, the signal snapped my mouth open and automatically started me talking.

"Do you paint yourself, Mr. Glescu?" I asked. I knew that would be a good gambit.

"Oh, no! Of course, I wanted to be an artist when I was a boy — I imagine every critic starts out that way — and I even committed a few daubs of my own. But they were very bad, very bad indeed! I found it far easier to write about paintings than to do them. Once I began reading the life of Morniel Mathaway, I knew I'd found my field. Not only did I empathize closely with his paintings, but he seemed so much like a person I could have known and liked. That's one of the things that puzzles me. He's quite different from what I imagined."

I nodded. "I bet he is."

"Of course history has a way of adding stature and romance to any important figure. And I can see several things about his personality that the glamorizing process of the centuries could — but I shouldn't go on in this fashion, Mr. Dantziger. You're his friend."

"About as much of a friend as he's got in the world," I told him, "which isn't saying much."

AND ALL the time I was trying to figure it out. But the more I figured, the more confused I got. The paradoxes in the thing. How could Morniel Mathaway



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become famous five hundred years from now by painting pictures that he first saw in a book published five hundred years from now? Who painted the pictures? Morniel Mathaway? The book said so, and with the book in his possession, he would certainly do them. But he'd be copying them out of the book. So who painted the original pictures?

Mr. Glescu looked worriedly at his forefinger. "I'm running out of time — practically none left!"

He sped up the stairs, with me behind him. When we burst into the studio, I braced myself for the argument over the book. I wasn't too happy about it, because I liked Mr. Glescu.

The book wasn't there; the bed was empty. And two other things weren't there — the time machine and Morniel Mathaway.

"He left in it!" Mr. Glescu gasped. "He *stranded* me here! He must have figured out that getting inside and closing the door made it return!"

"Yeah, he's a great figurer," I said bitterly. This I hadn't bargained for. This I wouldn't have helped to bring about. "And he'll probably figure out a very plausible story to tell the people in your time to explain how the whole thing happened. Why should he work his head off in the twentieth century when he can be an outstanding, hero-worshipped celebrity in the twenty-fifth?"

"But what will happen if they ask him to paint merely *one* picture —"

"He'll probably tell them he's already done his work and feels he can no longer add anything of importance to it. He'll no doubt end up giving lectures on himself. Don't worry, he'll make out. It's you I'm worried about. You're stuck here. Are they likely to send a rescue party after you?"

Mr. Glescu shook his head miserably. "Every scholar who wins the award has to sign a waiver of responsibility, in case he doesn't return. The machine may be used only once in fifty years — and by that time, some other scholar will claim and be given the right to witness the storming of the Bastille, the birth of Gautama Buddha or something of the sort. No, I'm *stuck* here, as you phrased it. Is it very bad, living in this period?"

I slapped him on the shoulder. I was feeling very guilty. "Not so bad. Of course, you'll need a social security card, and I don't know how you go about getting one at your age. And possibly — I don't know for sure — the F.B.I. or Immigration authorities may want to question you, since you're an illegal alien, kind of."

He looked appalled. "Oh, dear! That's quite bad enough!"



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AND THEN I got the idea. "No, it needn't be. Tell you what. Morniel has a social security card — he had a job a couple of years ago. And he keeps his birth certificate in that bureau drawer along with other personal papers. Why don't you just assume his identity? *He'll* never show you up as an imposter!"

"Do you think I could? Won't I be — won't his friends — his relatives —"

"Parents both dead, no relatives I ever heard about. And I told you I'm the closest thing to a friend he's got." I examined Mr. Glescu thoughtfully. "You could get away with it. Maybe grow a beard and dye it blond. Things like that. Naturally, the big problem would be earning a living. Being a specialist on Mathaway and the art movements that derived from him wouldn't get you fed an awful lot right now."

He grabbed at me. "I could paint! I've always dreamed of being a painter! I don't have much talent, but there are all sorts of artistic novelties I know about, all kinds of graphic innovations that don't exist in your time. Surely that would be enough — even without talent — to make a living for me on some third- or fourth-rate level!"

It was. It certainly was. But not on the third- or fourth-rate level. On the first. Mr. Glescu-Morniel Mathaway is the finest painter alive today. And the unhappiest.

"What's the matter with these people?" he asked me wildly after his last exhibition. "Praising me like that! I don't have an ounce of real talent in me; all my work, *all*, is completely derivative. I've tried to do something, *anything*, that was completely my own, but I'm so steeped in Mathaway that I just can't seem to make my own personality come through. And those idiotic critics go on raving about me — and the work isn't even my own!"

"Then whose is it?" I wanted to know.

"Mathaway's, of course," he said bitterly. "We thought there couldn't be a time paradox — I wish you could read all the scientific papers on the subject; they fill whole libraries — because it isn't possible, the time specialists argue, for a painting, say, to be copied from a future reproduction and so have no original artist. But that's what I'm doing! I'm copying from that book by memory!"

I wish I could tell him the truth — he's such a nice guy, especially compared to the real fake of a Mathaway, and he suffers so much.

But I can't.

You see, he's deliberately trying not to copy those paintings.



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He's working so hard at it that he refuses to think about that book or even discuss it. I finally got him to recently, for a few sentences, and you know what? He doesn't actually remember, except pretty hazily!

Of course he wouldn't — he's the real Morniel Mathaway and there is no paradox. But if I ever told him that he was actually painting the pictures instead of merely copying them from memory, he'd lose whatever little self-confidence he has. So I have to let him think he's a phony when he's nothing of the sort.

"Forget it," I go on telling him. "A buck's a buck."

— WILLIAM TENN

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# FORECAST

An editor who holds his breath until a James H. Schmitz story is delivered is apt to turn pretty blue in the face, for he is one of the most meticulous writers in the business. That's why the announcement of his two-part serial THE TIES OF EARTH, starting in next month's issue, is important news. It's a literary sizzler, with lots of deadly action going on all the time — or is it? That, you see, is why you'll sweat with Commager, who is — or is he? — experiencing these confusing and terrifying catastrophes. What was happening to him did worse than make no sense; it made altogether too much sense! But what was true and what was not?

There'll be no less than one novelet, WITH REDFERN ON CAPELLA XII by Charles Satterfield. Like most of us, Redfern is a properly wary fellow, especially on a world as dangerous as the twelfth planet of Capella, as who wouldn't be? Well, the people he falls in with, for instance, literally almost over his own dead body. But the lesson Redfern passes on to us is a valuable one: Don't get mixed up with fearless adventurers cast in the heroic mold; they can really put on the squeeze!

Short stories, of course — all we can cram into the issue; Willy Ley's FOR YOUR INFORMATION; editorial and — well, let Groff Conklin tell you himself: "And so, friends, after five years of reviewing for Galaxy, I say 'Au revoir.' I'm off for a long trip to the West Coast and then down to the Virgin Islands, where I am now, by gar, a bloated landowner! (The land isn't bloated by any means, being only fifteen gorgeous acres; I am — by pride and satisfaction.) It's been a fine five years, but now I turn the column over to Floyd C. Gale; he did some s-f writing years back and a great deal of reading since about 1929, has excellent taste and an easy, witty style. You'll like him. I do."



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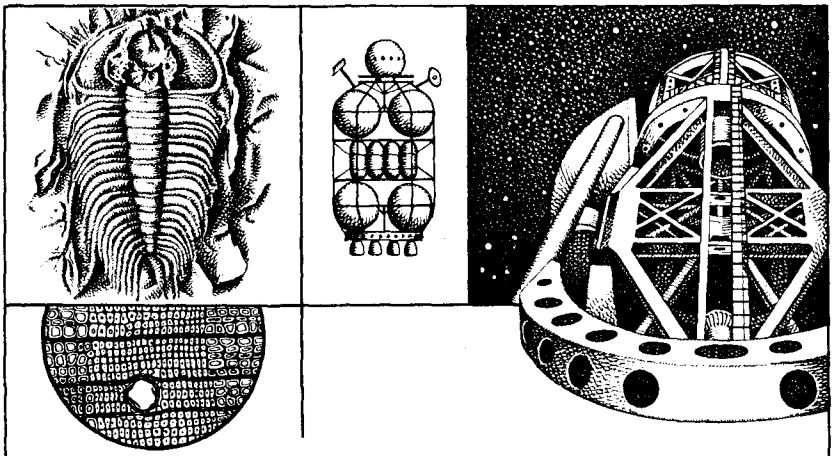
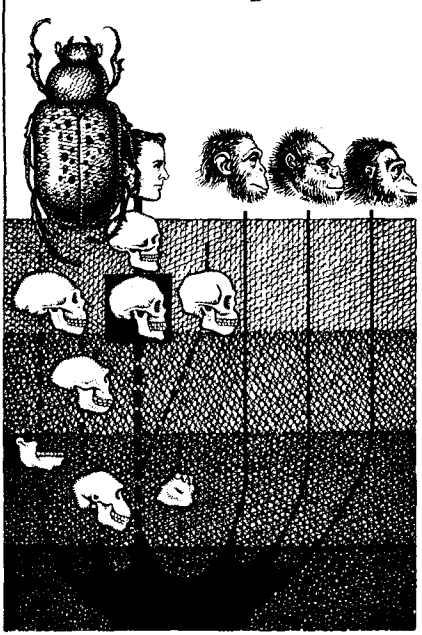


# for your information

By WILLY LEY



## THE HOW OF SPACE TRAVEL

DURING THE interval which must elapse between the writing of this column and its appearance on the newsstands, Walt Disney's *Man in Space* will have had its second showing on television. Naturally I do not know how many viewers will tune in on the repeat showing, but the audience for the premiere, in March of this year, was around forty million. This, I may add in the very



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**In front of a "story board" in the Walt Disney studios. This scene, in which Willy Ley explains the principle of the instrument carrier to artists Svendsen and O'Connor, was used in the film.**

strictest confidence, was higher than we thought it would be while we were planning and making the film.

As far as I am concerned, it began with a long distance call from Hollywood — just as in the movies — asking me to come out and act as adviser. No notice was offered, but I did have to ask for three days because I was slated to appear at a cocktail party given by the New York *Herald Tribune* where I was to receive the prize my book *Engineers' Dreams* had just won.

The timing of flights was such, at that time, that I could not attend the party, go home for my luggage and catch the non-stop transcontinental DC-7 afterward. What I could do was to take a flight from LaGuardia to Chicago and catch a non-stop



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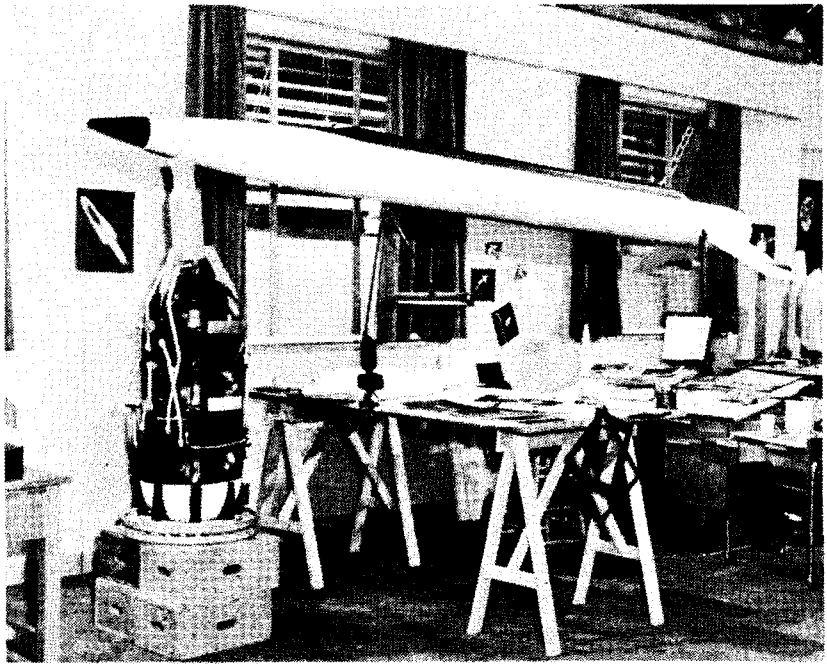

**Studio scene during the filming. The large rocket is a WAC-Corporal, the item at left a liquid fuel JATO unit. Model on drafting table is a V-2.**

DC-7 for the West Coast at midnight in Chicago. Needless to say, flying all night, even as a passenger, is not conducive to alertness.

WHEN I SAT in the beautiful air-conditioned studios of Walt Disney Productions in Burbank, California, I mentally weighed the problems involved. A nationwide network television show would have millions of viewers — especially if it had Disney's name attached to it — which meant that we must take nothing for granted. Writing such a script — at that moment, I still thought a script had to be written — would be entirely different from writing for publication, where you can take some things for granted.

A man who spends five dollars for a book is obviously willing



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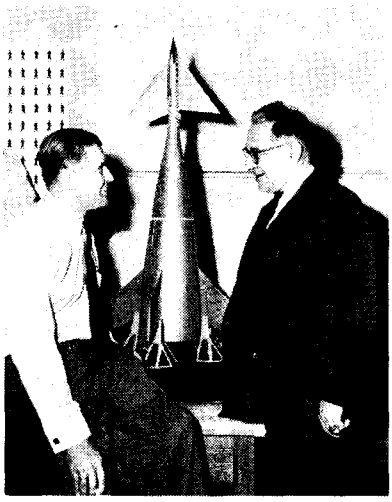
and probably eager to read it. Furthermore, he is reasonably solvent — or, if not, he is all the more interested in the subject matter — and he must have had a fair amount of education, for very few uneducated people buy books. Similarly, in writing this column, I can assume that every reader is interested in science and science fiction. But with a television audience of millions, all getting a free show, no such assumption could be made. Obviously everything had to be explained right from scratch.

On the other hand, the most instructive device invented so far was at our disposal: the animated cartoon. We would not have to *explain* with words, as I do in lectures; we could *show* how things work. As a means of visual instruction, this was superior even to ordinary film.

Sitting down with Ward Kimball, the director of the film, and his group of artists, I had the procedure explained to me. They don't have "scripts" at Disney's, at least not in the customary meaning of the word.

The "working scripts" are story boards, as they are called, large boards in wooden frames on which the sequence to be shown is pinned up with push pins. What goes on the first story board may be almost anything, quick sketches, photographs if they happen to be around, even pictures clipped from magazines. The boards are gradually refined and improved, the words which may be on the sound track are written down and also pinned up, and after what looks like a minimum of a thousand changes and after approval by Walt Disney, this narration finally does become a kind of script. It is actually typed out to be recorded on the sound track.



**Dr. Wernher von Braun (left) and Willy Ley between "takes".**

The very first problem was not so much what to put on the story boards, but what to leave out. At first, the idea had been to show the present concept of the Universe and of the Solar



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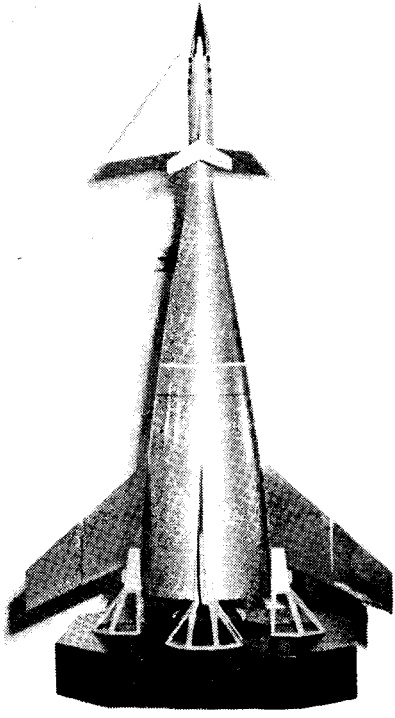

**The model of the four-stage ship designed by Dr. Wernher von Braun for the film.**

System in particular, then to trace the story of the idea of space travel in old science fiction to the present, and finally to tell how today's experts think space travel can be brought about, the climax being a rocket flight to the Moon or to Mars.

VERY LITTLE of these first story boards survived the discussions with the experts, not because it was wrong in any way, but because each expert dumped an hours' worth of additional information into the debate.

Dr. Heinz Haber delivered several fine lectures on problems of space medicine. Dr. Wernher von Braun, when turned loose on engineering detail, could go on until stopped by darkness or other appointments. As for me, I talked for about a week on the history of rocket research and the fundamental principles involved. I don't know just what had been expected of the experts before they arrived; what we did do was to turn offices and sketch rooms into classrooms and apparently everybody was very pleased.

The result of this large-scale influx of information was that Walt Disney first split the original first show into two and then authorized another split so that we worked on three shows instead of one.

The first, *Man in Space,* comprised history up to now, the problems of space medicine — the section where the Disney crew really let fly, it being the



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**Dr. Heinz Haber (left), Dr. von Braun (center) and the author examining model of non-form-fitting spacesuit.**

only section where humor was possible — and the immediate future, as embodied in the von Braun plan. The second film will show the building of the space station and the trip around the Moon (without landing). The trip to Mars, at first thought to be merely the climax of the picture, will be a show in itself.

When it came to the more detailed story boards, a new set of problems arose. The history was comparatively simple. Of the earliest Chinese rockets of 1230 A.D. and thereafter, not much more is known than that they existed. This left free rein for Ward Kimball and his crew to draw entertaining pictures. Of the later rockets, contemporary pictures are available, so we used these, although they often had to be redrawn to show up well on a television screen. (Let me insert here that the original film is in color, for foreign releases and possible theatrical showing in this country.) Of the most modern rockets, films are available,



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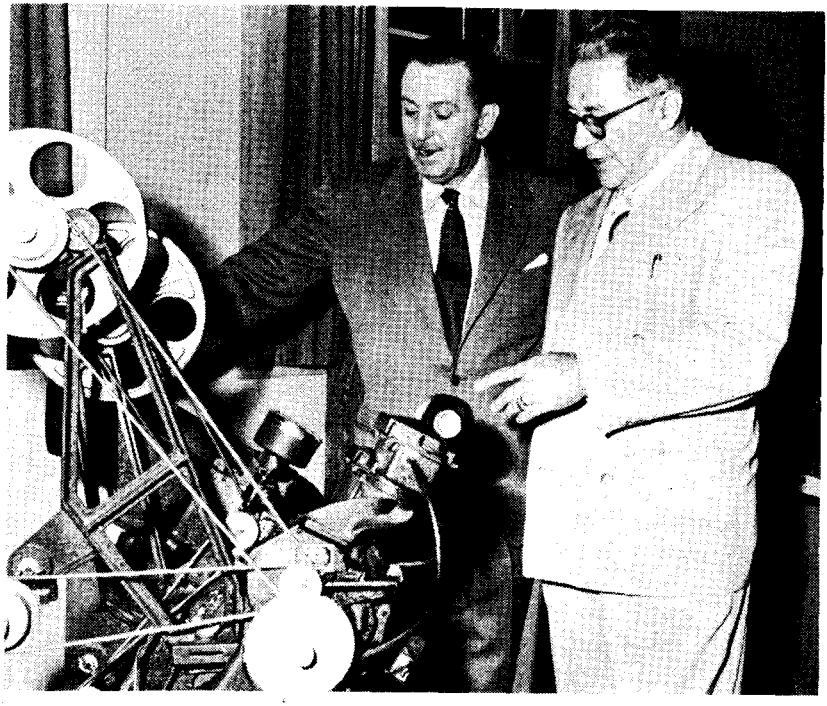
though they are sometimes not easy to come by.

An interesting little item was a film showing the (unsuccessful) takeoff of one of the earliest V-2 rockets at Peenemünde, Germany. When we screened the section, Wernher von Braun naturally recognized the film, for he had been there when it was taken. But he had been certain that this had been a silent film and yet the typical thunder of the V-2 motor came out of the loudspeaker. The solution of the puzzle was very simple, of course — one V-2 sounds like another and the sound was "courtesy White Sands Proving Grounds."

BUT I WAS speaking about the problems of explaining fundamentals. The most basic point of space travel is, of course, that the thrust of a rocket is independent of its surroundings; in other words, that the rocket will work in air, under water and also in a vacuum.

The rocket does not move be-



**Walt Disney (left) and the author checking some film footage.**



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cause the exhaust blast "pushes against the air." Then again, you can't say that it does not "push against the air," for if there is air around, it obviously cannot help doing so. The point is that this is not what causes the motion. What does cause the motion is that backward thrust produces forward movement. But how to show this?

Now it is a fact that you can propel yourself in a canoe on a quiet lake if you have a supply of rocks with you and throw them as hard as you can to the rear. But we were not sure whether this would make a good picture.

Another obvious fact is that a gun kicks back and that there is no reason to think that it wouldn't kick back when fired in a vacuum. One of the early story boards contained sketches of a machine gun mounted on a small railroad car, the machine gun firing over the tail end of the car, accelerating it in the opposite direction. Then somebody pinned up a sketch of a little dog sneezing violently. This one was used, along with a general explanation of "action" and "reaction" by means of the animated cartoon.

It all made two other problems which I know to be "tough" from lecture experience easy to explain.

In the solid fuel rocket, you have a stick of powder that burns off, producing quantities of exhaust gases that escape at high speed through the rearward nozzle like millions of molecular bullets, producing thrust. The tube that houses the powder stick must naturally be able to stand the strain and the heat of combustion. It does so mostly by virtue of the fact that the burning time of a solid-fuel rocket is usually less than a second.

But in the liquid-fuel rocket, this compact device has been, so to speak, taken apart. In place of the powder mixture, you have two liquids in separate tanks, one the fuel proper, the other a liquid providing oxygen for combustion. Instead of burning the fuel in the tank which contains it, it has to be forced into a combustion chamber either by gas pressure on the liquids or else by means of fuel pumps.

So far, there is no special problem. But the liquid-fuel rocket motor has to last for a full minute or more and the flame produced by the liquid fuels is usually hotter than that of solid fuels. At any event, the temperature of the flame is far above the melting point of the metal.

The way out of this dilemma is to put a cooling jacket around the combustion chamber and the exhaust nozzle and to send one of the two liquids, usually the fuel, through this cooling jacket



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before it is injected into the motor for burning.

AS I SAID, I know from lecture experience that a non-technical audience has a good deal of trouble understanding this solution. I don't know whether it is the idea of using a fuel for cooling that is so novel — after all, anybody should know that a drum of gasoline left in the garage on a cold winter's night is mighty cold and yet is still fuel. Or possibly a non-technical audience just cannot visualize how the liquid flows from the tank through the pumps into the distributing pipes and the cooling jacket to the injection nozzles.

But when it was shown in animated diagrams on the screen, nobody failed to grasp it literally at a glance.

The other "tough" problem has to do with the artificial satellite. A Viking rocket will climb to 158 miles and then fall back. The WAC Corporal rocket of "Project Bumper" climbed to 250 miles and then fell back. But the artificial satellite is supposed to stay in space, and when you say this, you get the inevitable question, "What holds it up?"

The correct and truthful answer is that the artificial satellite will stay in space because it is a satellite, but that does not sound like an answer to most people. In explanation by word of mouth, you usually have to resort to the comparison of a stone tied to a string swinging in a circle and say that centrifugal force counter balances the Earth's gravitational attraction.

In the film, we could show what happens — namely, that it is the Earth's gravitational pull which keeps the artificial satellite in a closed orbit. We first showed what would happen if the Earth's gravity did not exist: The rocket, rising at a slant, would simply keep going and escape into space. But then a set of lines representing gravity was drawn in, showing how gravity bends the otherwise straight line of the rocket's path into a closed orbit.

ANOTHER "toughie" which belonged in Dr. Heinz Haber's sequence on space medicine also has to do with gravity. With only a negligible number of exceptions, all citizens, resident aliens and temporary visitors are convinced that they can feel gravity. The plain truth is that they can't.

What they feel when standing up or sitting down is the effect of resisting the pull of gravity which appears in the sensation of weight. If they did not resist, they would, of course, fall, but while falling they'd feel weight-



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less. Which proves two things, first that you can be deep in a powerful gravitational field and still feel weightless, and second that you cannot feel the gravity itself, but only the effect of resisting its pull.

On the screen, this was shown in the form of an outline elevator happily occupied by Mr. Average Man who, to his great surprise, begins to feel weightless and float as Fate, represented by a huge pair of scissors, cuts the ropes.

Having told the history of rockets, shown the rockets probing beyond the stratosphere, explained why a rocket will work in empty space, demonstrated what happens in a rocket motor, illustrated the principle of the artificial satellite and given a quick course in space medicine, our next job was to go into the future for just a few years.

The first goal of liquid-fuel rocket research was to make one rise off the ground. Once that was accomplished, the goal may be called the altitude record, although I am fully aware that this is a gross oversimplication and that the actual altitude record is merely a part, and not the most important part, of the goal. The unmanned artificial satellite will be the next long step forward, but the ultimate goal is to get Man into space.

The first steps have already been made. Pilots have flown twice the speed of sound at high altitudes and piloted rocket-propelled airplanes have beaten the high-altitude record held for so many years by the manned stratosphere balloon *Explorer II*. In fact, it has now been revealed that a piloted plane has gone to 100,000 feet, a height where no rudder, elevator or aileron does much good any more. Space, however, is beyond that. And to go that far, the rocket-propelled airplane will need rocket boosters.

AGAIN, the medium of the animated cartoon made it easy to show just how such a project would be approached. If you have the finished rocket ship in mind, the work begins at the top of the whole thing. The top is a rocket-propelled airplane with sealed cabin. It would be built first and go through the customary series of tests, being towed by a big jet plane, without using any power of its own. Having been disconnected from the towing plane, the pilot would make glide landings.

After all this has worked to everybody's full satisfaction, a takeoff must be made with one rocket booster, followed by powered flight, unpowered glide and landing. Then the plane, which



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by then has become the top stage of a multi-stage rocket ship, would make a rather long flight with two rocket boosters pushing it in succession.

Finally, the whole ship would be assembled and be readied for "the flight" — the flight into space where the top stage (the "plane") circles the Earth a few times until the pilot reduces its speed by firing the forward rocket motors. The reduced speed will then make it change to another orbit, part of which is inside the atmosphere. And once the ship has entered the atmosphere, air resistance will reduce the speed more and more.

I want to interrupt my story here for two explanations. The rocket ship (Fig. 4 shows a photograph of the model) used in the film is Dr. Wernher von Braun's most recent design and constitutes a decided improvement over the original three-stage ship which he first described in his book *The Mars Project.*

It is not only lighter and smaller than the first design, but also differs in concept in several respects. However, I can't dwell on questions of detail until the designer has published it himself in a professional journal first.

The other thing I want to point out has to do with the meeting in space of this ship with the nose cone of the instrument-carrying rocket.

The meeting as shown in the film is correct insofar as the instrument carrier was stated to have been put into an orbit leading over both poles of the Earth. The manned ship was assumed to circle the Earth temporarily in the same orbit in which the space station is to be built at a later date. This would put the ship at a distance of 1075 miles from the ground. And though there may be an instrument carrier at that distance, it would not be the first one, which would be sent into an orbit much nearer the ground.

THE DETAILS of that first flight were worked out with all the care of which everybody involved was capable. A lot of data that would never show in the film was worked out just the same to see where it would lead.

At one point, von Braun and I forgot in an interesting manner what we were really doing. It had been suggested that ground control should have an instrument which would show the position of the manned ship at any time during its flight. The instrument, somebody said, might be a globe of the Earth, with a ring of transparent plastic around it, representing the orbit. But this ring should touch the ground, for it was to show takeoff and landing,



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too. The position of the ship could be indicated by a moving spot of light in the ring of transparent plastic.

This sounded fine and von Braun mused, "Now how would one build that?" whereupon we started debating how one might go about it. After a few minutes, one of the artists brought us down to sea level with the remark: "You know, here at Disney's, we just *draw* things."

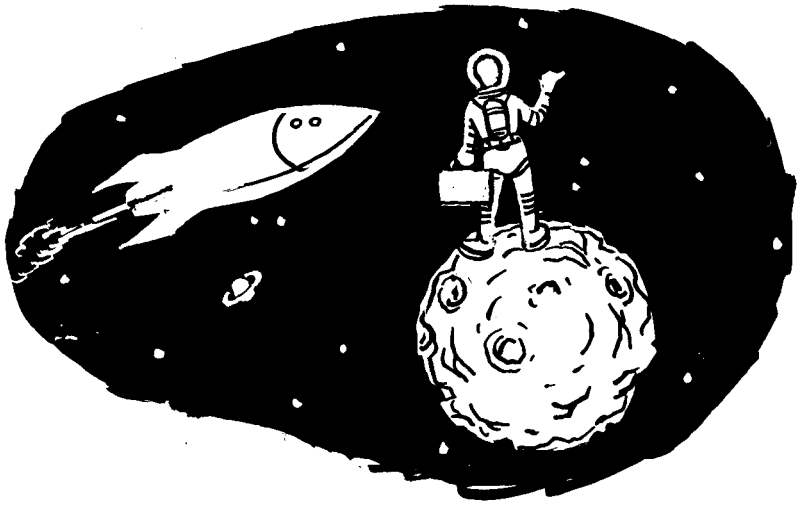
Well, this is the story of how a very large portion of the public of the United States and Canada got to see a first lesson in the principles of space travel, or rather of the beginnings of space travel, the first step outside the atmosphere.

I am quite sure that a decade from now, lecturers will rent copies of the film to explain to their audiences how prediction differed from reality.

I hope they won't forget to mention that prediction is one of the causes of reality. That's true of research. It's also true of science fiction.

— WILLY LEY

**All Photographs Courtesy Walt Disney Productions**





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# Bolden's Pets

By F. L. WALLACE

***The price of life was a life for a life — which was all the reward the victim looked for!***

HIS HANDS were shaking as he exhibited the gifts. If he were on Earth, he would be certain it was the flu; in the Centaurus system, kranken. But this was Van Daamas, so Lee Bolden couldn't say what he had. Man hadn't been here long enough to investigate the diseases with any degree of thoroughness: There were always different hazards to overcome as new planets were settled.

But whatever infection he had, Bolden was not greatly concerned as he counted out the gifts. He had felt the onset of illness perhaps an hour before. When he got back to the settlement he'd be taken care of. That was half a day's flight from here. The base was equipped with the best medical facilities that had been devised.

He stacked up the gifts to make an impressive show: five pairs of radar goggles, seven high-velocity carbines, seven boxes of ammunition. This was the natives' own rule and was never to be disregarded — it had to be an odd number of gifts.

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The Van Daamas native gazed impassively at the heap. He carried a rather strange bow and a quiver was strapped to his thigh. With one exception, the arrows were brightly colored, mostly red and yellow. Bolden supposed this was for easy recovery in case the shot missed. But there was always one arrow that was stained dark blue. Bolden had observed this before — no native was ever without that one somber-looking arrow.

The man of Van Daamas stood there and the thin robe that was no protection against the elements rippled slightly in the chill current of air that flowed down the mountainside. "I will go talk with the others," he said in English.

"Go talk," said Bolden, trying not to shiver. He replied in native speech, but a few words exhausted his knowledge and he had to revert to his own language. "Take the gifts with you. They are yours, no matter what you decide."

The native nodded and reached for a pair of goggles. He tried them on, looking out over fog and mist-shrouded slopes. These people of Van Daamas needed radar less than any race Bolden knew of. Living by preference in mountains, they had developed a keenness of vision that enabled them to see through the perpetual fog and mist far better than any Earthman. Paradoxically it was the goggles they appreciated most. Extending their sight seemed more precious to them than powerful carbines.

The native shoved the goggles up on his forehead, smiling with pleasure. Noticing that Bolden was shivering, he took his hands and examined them. "Hands sick?" he queried.

"A little," said Bolden. "I'll be all right in the morning."

The native gathered up the gifts. "Go talk," he repeated as he went away.

LEE BOLDEN sat in the copter and waited. He didn't know how much influence this native had with his people. He had come to negotiate, but this might have been because he understood English somewhat better than the others.

A council of the natives would make the decision about working for the Earthmen's settlement. If they approved of the gifts, they probably would. There was nothing to do now but wait — and shiver. His hands were getting numb and his feet weren't much better.

Presently the native came out of the fog carrying a rectangular wicker basket. Bolden was depressed when he saw it. One gift in return for goggles, carbines,



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ammunition. The rate of exchange was not favorable. Neither would the reply be.

The man set the basket down and waited for Bolden to speak. "The people have talked?" asked Bolden.

"We have talked to come," said the native, holding out his fingers. "In five or seven days, we come."

It was a surprise, a pleasant one. Did one wicker basket equal so many fine products of superlative technology? Apparently it did. The natives had different values. To them, one pair of goggles was worth more than three carbines, a package of needles easily the equivalent of a box of ammunition.

"It's good you will come. I will leave at once to tell them at the settlement," said Bolden. There was something moving in the basket, but the weave was close and he couldn't see through it.

"Stay," the man advised. "A storm blows through the mountains."

"I will fly around the storm," said Bolden.

If he hadn't been sick he might have accepted the offer. But he had to get back to the settlement for treatment. On a strange planet you never could tell what might develop from a seemingly minor ailment. Besides he'd already been gone two days searching for this tribe in the interminable fog that hung over the mountains. Those waiting at the base would want him back as soon as he could get there.

"Fly far around," said the man. "It is a big storm." He took up the basket and held it level with the cabin, opening the top. An animal squirmed out and disappeared inside.

Bolden looked askance at the eyes that glowed in the dim interior. He hadn't seen clearly what the creature was and he didn't like the idea of having it loose in the cabin, particularly if he had to fly through a storm. The man should have left it in the basket. But the basket plus the animal would have been two gifts — and the natives never considered anything in even numbers.

"It will not hurt," said the man. "A gentle pet."

AS FAR as he knew, there were no pets and very few domesticated animals. Bolden snapped on the cabin light. It was one of those mysterious creatures every tribe kept in cages near the outskirts of their camps. What they did with them no one knew and the natives either found it impossible to explain or did not care to do so.

It seemed unlikely that the creatures were used for food and certainly they were not work ani-



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mals. And in spite of what this man said, they were not pets either. No Earthman had ever seen a native touch them nor had the creatures ever been seen wandering at large in the camp. And until now, none had been permitted to pass into Earth's possession. The scientists at the settlement would regard this acquisition with delight.

"Touch it," said the native.

Bolden held out his trembling hand and the animal came to him with alert and friendly yellow eyes. It was about the size of a rather small dog, but it didn't look much like one. It resembled more closely a tiny slender bear with a glossy and shaggy cinnamon coat. Bolden ran his hands through the clean-smelling fur and the touch warmed his fingers. The animal squirmed and licked his fingers.

"It has got your taste," said the native. "Be all right now. It is yours." He turned and walked into the mist.

Bolden got in and started the motors while the animal climbed into the seat beside him. It was a friendly thing and he couldn't understand why the natives always kept it caged.

He headed straight up, looking for a way over the mountains to avoid the impending storm. Fog made it difficult to tell where the peaks were and he had to drop lower, following meandering valleys. He flew as swiftly as limited visibility would allow, but he hadn't gone far when the storm broke. He tried to go over the top of it, but this storm seemed to have no top. The region was incompletely mapped and even radar wasn't much help in the tremendous electrical display that raged around the ship.

His arms ached as he clung to the controls. His hands weren't actually cold, they were numb. His legs were leaden. The creature crept closer to him and he had to nudge it away. Momentarily the distraction cleared his head. He couldn't put it off any longer. He had to land and wait out the storm — if he could find a place to land.

Flexing his hands until he worked some feeling into them, he inched the ship lower. A canyon wall loomed at one side and he had to veer away and keep on looking.

Eventually he found his refuge — a narrow valley where the force of the winds was not extreme — and he set the land anchor. Unless something drastic happened, it would hold.

HE MADE the seat into a bed, decided he was too tired to eat, and went directly to sleep. When he awakened, the storm was still raging and the little ani-



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mal was snoozing by his side.

He felt well enough to eat. The native hadn't explained what the animal should be fed, but it accepted everything Bolden offered. Apparently it was as omniverous as Man. Before lying down again, he made the other seat into a bed, although it didn't seem to matter. The creature preferred being as close to him as it could get and he didn't object. The warmth was comforting.

Alternately dozing and waking he waited out the storm. It lasted a day and a half. Finally the sun was shining. This was two days since he had first fallen ill, four days after leaving the settlement.

Bolden felt much improved. His hands were nearly normal and his vision wasn't blurred. He looked at the little animal curled in his lap, gazing up at him with solemn yellow eyes. If he gave it encouragement it would probably be crawling all over him. However, he couldn't have it frisking around while he was flying. "Come, Pet," he said — there wasn't anything else to call it — "you're going places."

Picking it up, half-carrying and half-dragging it, he took it to the rear of the compartment, improvising a narrow cage back there. He was satisfied it would hold. He should have done this in the beginning. Of course he hadn't felt like it then and he hadn't had the time — and anyway the native would have resented such treatment of a gift. Probably it was best he had waited.

His pet didn't like confinement. It whined softly for a while. The noise stopped when the motors roared. Bolden headed straight up, until he was high enough to establish communication over the peaks. He made a brief report about the natives' agreement and his own illness, then he started home.

He flew at top speed for ten hours. He satisfied his hunger by nibbling concentrated rations from time to time. The animal whined occasionally, but Bolden had learned to identify the sounds it made. It was neither hungry nor thirsty. It merely wanted to be near him. And all he wanted was to reach the base.

The raw sprawling settlement looked good as he sat the copter down. Mechanics came running from the hangars. They opened the door and he stepped out.

And fell on his face. There was no feeling in his hands and none in his legs. He hadn't recovered.

DOCTOR Kessler peered at him through the microscreen. It gave his face a narrow insubstantial appearance. The microscreen was a hemispherical force field enclosing his head. It origi-



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nated in a tubular circlet that snapped around his throat at the top of the decontagion suit. The field killed all microlife that passed through it or came in contact with it. The decontagion suit was non-porous and impermeable, covering completely the rest of his body. The material was thinner over his hands and thicker at the soles.

Bolden took in the details at a glance. "Is it serious?" he asked, his voice cracking with the effort.

"Merely a precaution," said the doctor hollowly. The microscreen distorted sound as well as sight. "Merely a precaution. We know what it is, but we're not sure of the best way to treat it."

Bolden grunted to himself. The microscreen and decontagion suit were strong precautions.

The doctor wheeled a small machine from the wall and placed Bolden's hand in a narrow trough that held it steady. The eyepiece slid into the microscreen and, starting at the finger tips, Kessler examined the arm, traveling slowly upward. At last he stopped. "Is this where feeling ends?"

"I think so. Touch it. Yeah. It's dead below there."

"Good. Then we've got it pegged. It's the Bubble Death."

Bolden showed concern and the doctor laughed. "Don't worry. It's called that because of the way it looks through the X-ray microscope. It's true that it killed the scouting expedition that discovered the planet, but it won't get you."

"They had antibiotics. Neobiotics, too."

"Sure. But they had only a few standard kinds. Their knowledge was more limited and they lacked the equipment we now have."

The doctor made it sound comforting. But Bolden wasn't comforted. Not just yet.

"Sit up and take a look," said Kessler, bending the eyepiece around so Bolden could use it. "The dark filamented lines are nerves. See what surrounds them?"

Bolden watched as the doctor adjusted the focus for him. Each filament was covered with countless tiny spheres that isolated and insulated the nerve from contact. That's why he couldn't feel anything. The spherical microbes did look like bubbles. As yet they didn't seem to have attacked the nerves directly.

While he watched, the doctor swiveled out another eyepiece for his own use and turned a knob on the side of the machine. From the lens next to his arm an almost invisible needle slid out and entered his flesh. Bolden could see it come into the field of view. It didn't hurt. Slowly it approached the dark branching filament,



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never quite touching it.

The needle was hollow and as Kessler squeezed the knob it sucked in the spheres. The needle extended a snout which crept along the nerve, vacuuming in microbes as it moved. When a section had been cleansed, the snout was retracted. Bolden could feel the needle then.

WHEN the doctor finished, he laid Bolden's hand back at his side and wheeled the machine to the wall, extracting a small capsule which he dropped into a slot that led to the outside. He came back and sat down.

"Is that what you're going to do?" asked Bolden. "Scrape them off?"

"Hardly. There are too many nerves. If we had ten machines and enough people to operate them, we might check the advance in one arm. That's all." The doctor leaned back in the chair. "No. I was collecting a few more samples. We're trying to find out what the microbes react to."

"*More* samples? Then you must have taken others."

"Certainly. We put you out for a while to let you rest." The chair came down on four legs. "You've got a mild case. Either that or you have a strong natural immunity. It's now been three days since you reported the first symptoms and it isn't very advanced. It killed the entire scouting expedition in less time than that."

Bolden looked at the ceiling. Eventually they'd find a cure. But would he be alive that long?

"I suspect what you're thinking," said the doctor. "Don't overlook our special equipment. We already have specimens in the sonic accelerator. We've been able to speed up the life processes of the microbes about ten times. Before the day is over we'll know which of our anti and neobiotics they like the least. Tough little things so far — unbelievably tough — but you can be sure we'll smack them."

His mind was active, but outwardly Bolden was quiescent as the doctor continued his explanation.

The disease attacked the superficial nervous system, beginning with the extremities. The bodies of the crew of the scouting expedition had been in an advanced state of decomposition when the medical rescue team reached them and the microbes were no longer active. Nevertheless it was a reasonable supposition that death had come shortly after the invading bacteria had reached the brain. Until then, though nerves were the route along which the microbes traveled, no irreparable damage had been done.



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THIS MUCH was good news. Either he would recover completely or he would die. He would not be crippled permanently. Another factor in his favor was the sonic accelerator. By finding the natural resonance of the one-celled creature and gradually increasing the tempo of the sound field, the doctor could grow and test ten generations in the laboratory while one generation was breeding in the body. Bolden was the first patient actually being observed with the disease, but the time element wasn't as bad as he had thought.

"That's where you are," concluded Kessler. "Now, among other things, we've got to find where you've been."

"The ship has an automatic log," said Bolden. "It indicates every place I landed."

"True, but our grid coordinates are not exact. It will be a few years before we're able to look at a log and locate within ten feet of where a ship has been." The doctor spread out a large photomap. There were several marks on it. He fastened a stereoscope viewer over Bolden's eyes and handed him a pencil. "Can you use this?"

"I think so." His fingers were stiff and he couldn't feel, but he could mark with the pencil. Kessler moved the map nearer and the terrain sprang up in detail. In some cases, he could see it more clearly than when he had been there, because on the map there was no fog. Bolden made a few corrections and the doctor took the map away and removed the viewer.

"We'll have to stay away from these places until we get a cure. Did you notice anything peculiar in any of the places you went?"

"It was all mountainous country."

"Which probably means that we're safe on the plain. Were there any animals?"

"Nothing that came close. Birds maybe."

"More likely it was an insect. Well, we'll worry about the host and how it is transmitted. Try not to be upset. You're as safe as you would be on Earth."

"Yeah," said Bolden. "Where's the pet?"

The doctor laughed. "You did very well on that one. The biologists have been curious about the animal since the day they saw one in a native camp."

"They can *look* at it as much as they want," said Bolden. "Nothing more on this one, though. It's a personal gift."

"You're sure it's personal?"

"The native said it was."

The doctor sighed. "I'll tell them. They won't like it, but we can't argue with the natives if we want their cooperation."



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Bolden smiled. The animal was safe for at least six months. He could understand the biologists' curiosity, but there was enough to keep them curious for a long time on a new planet. And it was his. In a remarkably short time, he had become attached to it. It was one of those rare things that Man happened across occasionally — about once in every five planets. Useless, completely useless, the creature had one virtue. It liked Man and Man liked it. It was a pet. "Okay," he said. "But you didn't tell me where it is."

The doctor shrugged, but the gesture was lost in the shapeless decontagion suit. "Do you think we're letting it run in the streets? It's in the next room, under observation."

The doctor was more concerned than he was letting on. The hospital was small and animals were never kept in it. "It's not the carrier. I was sick before it was given to me."

"You had something, we know that much, but was it this? Even granting that you're right, it was in contact with you and may now be infected."

"I think life on this planet isn't bothered by the disease. The natives have been every place I went and none of them seemed to have it."

"Didn't they?" said the doctor, going to the door. "Maybe. It's too early to say." He reeled a cord out of the wall and plugged it into the decontagion suit. He spread his legs and held his arms away from his sides. In an instant, the suit glowed white hot. Only for an instant, and it was insulated inside. Even so it must be uncomfortable — and the process would be repeated outside. The doctor wasn't taking any chances. "Try to sleep," he said. "Ring if there's a change in your condition — even if you think it's insignificant."

"I'll ring," said Bolden. In a short time he fell asleep. It was easy to sleep.

THE NURSE entered as quietly as she could in the decontagion outfit. It awakened Bolden. It was evening. He had slept most of the day, "Which one are you?" he asked. "The pretty one?"

"All nurses are pretty if you get well. Here. Swallow this."

It was Peggy. He looked doubtfully at what she held out. "All of it?"

"Certainly. You get it down and I'll see that it comes back up. The string won't hurt you."

She passed a small instrument over his body, reading the dial she held in the other hand. The information, he knew, was being recorded elsewhere on a master chart. Apparently the instrument



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measured neural currents and hence indirectly the progress of the disease. Already they had evolved new diagnostic techniques. He wished they'd made the same advance in treatment.

After expertly reeling out the instrument he had swallowed, the nurse read it and deposited it in a receptacle in the wall. She brought a tray and told him to eat. He wanted to question her, but she was insistent about it so he ate. Allowance had been made for his partial paralysis. The food was liquid. It was probably nutritious, but he didn't care for the taste.

She took the tray away and came back and sat beside him. "Now we can talk," she said.

"What's going on?" he said bluntly. "When do I start getting shots? Nothing's been done for me so far."

"I don't know what the doctor's working out for you. I'm just the nurse."

"Don't try to tell me that," he said. "You're a doctor yourself. In a pinch you could take Kessler's place."

"And I get my share of pinches," she said brightly. "Okay, so I'm a doctor, but only on Earth. Until I complete my off-planet internship here, I'm not allowed to practice."

"You know as much about Van Daamas as anyone does."

"That may be," she said. "Now don't be alarmed, but the truth ought to be obvious. None of our anti or neobiotics or combinations of them have a positive effect. We're looking for something new."

It should have been obvious; he had been hoping against that, though. He looked at the shapeless figure sitting beside him and remembered Peggy as she usually looked. He wondered if they were any longer concerned with him as an individual. They must be working mainly to keep the disease from spreading. "What are my chances?"

"Better than you think. We're looking for an additive that will make the biotics effective."

HE HADN'T thought of that, though it was often used, particularly on newly settled planets. He had heard of a virus infection common to Centaurus that could be completely controlled by a shot of neobiotics plus aspirin, though separately neither was of any value. But the discovery of what substance should be added to what antibiotic was largely one of trial and error. That took time and there wasn't much time. "What else?" he said.

"That's about it. We're not trying to make you believe this isn't serious. But don't forget we're working ten times as fast



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as the disease can multiply. We expect a break any moment." She got up. "Want a sedative for the night?"

"I've got a sedative inside me. Looks like it will be permanent."

"That's what I like about you, you're so cheerful," she said, leaning over and clipping something around his throat. "In case you're wondering, we're going to be busy tonight checking the microbe. We can put someone in with you, but we thought you'd rather have all of us working on it."

"Sure," he said.

"This is a body monitor. If you want anything just call and we'll be here within minutes."

"Thanks," he said. "I won't panic tonight."

She plugged in the decontagion uniform, flashed it on and then left the room. After she was gone, the body monitor no longer seemed reassuring. It was going to take something positive to pull him through.

They were going to work through the night, but did they actually hope for success. What had Peggy said? None of the anti or neobiotics had a positive reaction. Unknowingly she had let it slip. The reaction was negative; the bubble microbes actually grew faster in the medium that was supposed to stop them. It happened occasionally on strange planets. It was his bad luck that it was happening to him.

He pushed the thoughts out of his mind and tried to sleep. He did for a time. When he awakened he thought, at first, it was his arms that had aroused him. They seemed to be on fire, deep inside. To a limited extent, he still had control. He could move them though there was no surface sensation. Interior nerves had not been greatly affected until now. But outside the infection had crept up. It was no longer just above the wrists. It had reached his elbows and passed beyond. A few inches below his shoulder he could feel nothing. The illness was accelerating. If they had ever thought of amputation, it was too late, now.

HE RESISTED an impulse to cry out. A nurse would come and sit beside him, but he would be taking her from work that might save his life. The infection would reach his shoulders and move across his chest and back. It would travel up his throat and he wouldn't be able to move his lips. It would paralyze his eyelids so that he couldn't blink. Maybe it would blind him, too. And then it would find ingress to his brain.

The result would be a metabolic explosion. Swiftly each bodily function would stop altogether or race wildly as the cen-



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tral nervous system was invaded, one regulatory center after the other blanking out. His body would be aflame or it would smolder and flicker out. Death might be spectacular or it could come very quietly.

That was one reason he didn't call the nurse.

The other was the noise.

It was a low sound, half purr, half a coaxing growl. It was the animal the native had given him, confined in the next room. Bolden was not sure why he did what he did next. Instinct or reason may have governed his actions. But instinct and reason are divisive concepts that cannot apply to the human mind, which is actually indivisible.

He got out of bed. Unable to stand, he rolled to the floor. He couldn't crawl very well because his hands wouldn't support his weight so he crept along on his knees and elbows. It didn't hurt. Nothing hurt except the fire in his bones. He reached the door and straightened up on his knees. He raised his hand to the handle, but couldn't grasp it. After several trials, he abandoned the attempt and hooked his chin on the handles, pulling it down. The door opened and he was in the next room. The animal was whining louder now that he was near. Yellow eyes glowed at him from the corner. He crept to the cage.

It was latched. The animal shivered eagerly, pressing against the side, striving to reach him. His hands were numb and he couldn't work the latch. The animal licked his fingers.

It was easier after that. He couldn't feel what he was doing, but somehow he managed to unlatch it. The door swung open and the animal bounded out, knocking him to the floor.

He didn't mind at all because now he was sure he was right. The natives had given him the animal for a purpose. Their own existence was meager, near the edge of extinction. They could not afford to keep something that wasn't useful. And this creature was useful. Tiny blue sparks crackled from the fur as it rubbed against him in the darkness. It was not whining. It rumbled and purred as it licked his hands and arms and rolled against his legs.

After a while he was strong enough to crawl back to bed, leaning against the animal for support. He lifted himself up and fell across the bed in exhaustion. Blood didn't circulate well in his crippled body. The animal bounded up and tried to melt itself into his body. He couldn't push it away if he wanted. He didn't want to. He stirred and got himself into a more comfortable position. He wasn't going to die.



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IN THE morning, Bolden was awake long before the doctor came in. Kessler's face was haggard and the smile was something he assumed solely for the patient's benefit. If he could have seen what the expression looked like after filtering through the microscreen, he would have abandoned it. "I see you're holding your own," he said with hollow cheerfulness. "We're doing quite well ourselves."

"I'll bet," said Bolden. "Maybe you've got to the point where one of the antibiotics doesn't actually stimulate the growth of the microbes?"

"I was afraid you'd find it out," sighed the doctor. "We can't keep everything from you."

"You could have given me a shot of plasma and said it was a powerful new drug."

"That idea went out of medical treatment a couple of hundred years ago," said the doctor. "You'd feel worse when you failed to show improvement. Settling a planet isn't easy and the dangers aren't imaginary. You've got to be able to face facts as they come."

He peered uncertainly at Bolden. The microscreen distorted his vision, too. "We're making progress though it may not seem so to you. When a mixture of a calcium salt plus two antihistamines is added to a certain neobiotic, the result is that the microbe grows no faster than it should. Switching the ingredients here and there — maybe it ought to be a potassium salt — and the first thing you know we'll have it stopped cold."

"I doubt the effectiveness of those results," said Bolden. "In fact, I think you're on the wrong track. Try investigating the effects of neural induction."

"What are you talking about?" said the doctor, coming closer and glancing suspiciously at the lump beside Bolden. "Do you feel dizzy? Is there anything else unusual that you notice?"

"Don't shout at the patient." Bolden waggled his finger reprovingly. He was proud of the finger. He couldn't feel what he was doing, but he had control over it. "You, Kessler, should face the fact that a doctor can learn from a patient what the patient learned from the natives."

But Kessler didn't hear what he said. He was looking at the upraised hand. "You're moving almost normally," he said. "Your own immunity factor is controlling the disease."

"Sure. I've got an immunity factor," said Bolden. "The same one the natives have. Only it's not inside my body." He rested his hand on the animal beneath the covers. It never wanted to leave him. It wouldn't have to.



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"I can set your mind at rest on one thing, Doctor. Natives are susceptible to the disease, too. That's why they were able to recognize I had it. They gave me the cure and told me what it was, but I was unable to see it until it was nearly too late. Here it is." He turned back the covers and the exposed animal sleeping peacefully on his legs which raised its head and licked his fingers. He felt that.

AFTER AN explanation the doctor tempered his disapproval. It was an unsanitary practice, but he had to admit that the patient was much improved. Kessler verified the state of Bolden's health by extensive use of the X-ray microscope. Reluctantly he wheeled the machine to the wall and covered it up.

"The infection is definitely receding," he said. "There are previously infected areas in which I find it difficult to locate a single microbe. What I can't understand is how it's done. According to you, the animal doesn't break the skin with its tongue and therefore nothing is released into the bloodstream. All that seems necessary is that the animal be near you." He shook his head behind the microscreen. "I don't think much of the electrical analogy you used."

"I said the first thing I thought of. I don't know if that's the way it works, but it seems to me like a pretty fair guess."

"The microbes *do* cluster around nerves," said the doctor. "We know that neural activity is partly electrical. If the level of that activity can be increased, the bacteria might be killed by ionic dissociation." He glanced speculatively at Bolden and the animal. "Perhaps you do borrow nervous energy from the animal. We might also find it possible to control the disease with an electrical current."

"Don't try to find out on me," said Bolden. "I've been an experimental specimen long enough. Take somebody who's healthy. I'll stick with the natives' method."

"I wasn't thinking of experiments in your condition. You're still not out of danger." Nevertheless he showed his real opinion when he left the room. He failed to plug in and flash the decontagion suit.

Bolden smiled at the doctor's omission and ran his hand through the fur. He was going to get well.

BUT HIS progress was somewhat slower than he'd anticipated though it seemed to satisfy the doctor who went on with his experiments. The offending bacteria could be killed electrically.



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But the current was dangerously large and there was no practical way to apply the treatment to humans. The animal was the only effective method.

Kessler discovered the microbe required an intermediate host. A tick or a mosquito seemed indicated. It would take a protracted search of the mountains to determine just what insect was the carrier. In any event the elaborate sanitary precautions were unnecessary. Microscreens came down and decontagion suits were no longer worn. Bolden could not pass the disease on to anyone else.

Neither could the animal. It seemed wholely without parasites. It was clean and affectionate, warm to the touch. Bolden was fortunate that there was such a simple cure for the most dreaded disease on Van Daamas.

It was several days before he was ready to leave the small hospital at the edge of the settlement. At first he sat up in bed and then he was allowed to walk across the room. As his activity increased, the animal became more and more content to lie on the bed and follow him with its eyes. It no longer frisked about as it had in the beginning. As Bolden told the nurse, it was becoming housebroken.

The time came when the doctor failed to find a single microbe. Bolden's newly returned strength and the sensitivity of his skin where before there had been numbness confirmed the diagnosis. He was well. Peggy came to walk him home. It was pleasant to have her near.

"I see you're ready," she said, laughing at his eagerness.

"Except for one thing," he said. "Come, Pet." The animal raised its head from the bed where it slept.

"Pet?" she said quizzically. "You ought to give it a name. You've had it long enough to decide on something."

"Pet's a name," he said. "What can I call it? Doc? Hero?"

She made a face. "I can't say I care for either choice, although it did save your life."

"Yes, but that's an attribute it can't help. The important thing is that if you listed what you expect of a pet you'd find it in this creature. Docile, gentle, lively at times; all it wants is to be near you, to have you touch it. And it's very clean."

"All right, call it Pet if you want," said Peggy. "Come on, Pet."

It paid no attention to her. It came when Bolden called, getting slowly off the bed. It stayed as close as it could get to Bolden. He was still weak so they didn't walk fast and, at first, the animal was able to keep up.



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IT WAS almost noon when they went out. The sun was brilliant and Van Daamas seemed a wonderful place to be alive in. Yes, with death behind him, it was a very wonderful place. Bolden chatted gaily with Peggy. She was fine company.

And then Bolden saw the native who had given him the animal. Five to seven days, and he had arrived on time. The rest of the tribe must be elsewhere in the settlement. Bolden smiled in recognition while the man was still at some distance. For an answer the native shifted the bow in his hand and glanced behind the couple, in the direction of the hospital.

The movement with the bow might have been menacing, but Bolden ignored that gesture. It was the sense that something was missing that caused him to look down. The animal was not at his side. He turned around.

The creature was struggling in the dust. It got to its feet and wobbled toward him, staggering crazily as it tried to reach him. It spun around, saw him, and came on again. The tongue lolled out and it whined once. Then the native shot it through the heart, pinning it to the ground. The short tail thumped and then it died.

Bolden couldn't move. Peggy clutched his arm. The native walked over to the animal and looked down. He was silent for a moment. "Die anyway soon," he said to Bolden. "Burned out inside."

He bent over. The bright yellow eyes had faded to nothingness in the sunlight. "Gave you its health," said the man of Van Daamas respectfully as he broke off the protruding arrow.

It was a dark blue arrow.

NOW EVERY settlement on the planet has Bolden's pets. They have been given a more scientific name, but nobody remembers what it is. The animals are kept in pens, exactly as is done by the natives, on one side of town, not too near any habitation.

For a while, there was talk that it was unscientific to use the animal. It was thought that an electrical treatment could be developed to replace it. Perhaps this was true. But settling a planet is a big task. As long as one method works there isn't time for research. And it works — the percentage of recovery is as high as in other common ailments.

But in any case the animal can never become a pet, though it may be in the small but bright spark of consciousness that is all the little yellow-eyed creature wants. The quality that makes it



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so valuable is the final disqualification. Strength can be a weakness. Its nervous system is too powerful for a man in good health, upsetting the delicate balance of the human body in a variety of unusual ways. How the energy-transfer takes place has never been determined exactly, but it does occur.

It is only when he is stricken with the Bubble Death and needs additional energy to drive the invading microbes from the tissue around his nerves that the patient is allowed to have one of Bolden's pets.

In the end, it is the animal that dies. As the natives knew, it is kindness to kill it quickly.

It is highly regarded and respectfully spoken of. Children play as close as they can get, but are kept well away from the pens by a high, sturdy fence. Adults walk by and nod kindly to it.

Bolden never goes there nor will he speak of it. His friends say he's unhappy about being the first Earthman to discover the usefulness of the little animal. They are right. It is a distinction he doesn't care for. He still has the blue arrow. There are local craftsmen who can mend it, but he has refused their services. He wants to keep it as it is.

—F. L. WALLACE

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# Jack of No Trades

By EVELYN E. SMITH

*I was psick of Psi powers, not having any. Or didn't I? Maybe they'd psee otherwise psomeday!*

Illustrated by CAVAT

I WALKED into the dining room and collided with a floating mass of fabric, which promptly draped itself over me like a sentient shroud.

"Oh, for God's sake, Kevin!" my middle brother's voice came muffled through the folds. "If you can't help, at least don't hinder!"

I managed to struggle out of the tablecloth, even though it seemed to be trying to wrap itself around me. When Danny got excited, he lost his mental grip.

"I could help," I yelled as soon as I got my head free, "if anybody would let me and, what's more, I could set the table a damn sight faster by hand than you do with 'kinesis."

Just then Father appeared at the head of the table. He could as easily have walked downstairs as teleported, but I belonged to a family of exhibitionists. And Father tended to show off as if he were still a kid. Not that he looked his age — he was big and blond, like Danny and Tim and me, and could have passed for our older brother.

"Boys, boys!" he reproved us. "Danny, you ought to be ashamed of yourself — picking on poor Kev."



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Even if it hadn't been Danny's fault, he would still nave been blamed.

Nobody was ever supposed to raise a voice or a hand or a thought to poor afflicted Kev, because nature had picked on me enough. And the nicer everybody was to me, the nastier I became, since only when they lost their tempers could I get — or so I believed — their true attitude toward me.

How else could I tell?

"Sorry, fella," Dan apologized to me. The tablecloth spread itself out on the table. "Wrinkles," he grumbled to himself. "Wrinkles. And I had it so nice and smooth before. Mother will be furious."

"If she were going to be furious, she'd be furious already," Father reminded him sadly. It must be tough to be married to a deep-probe telepath, I thought, and I felt a sudden wave of sympathy for him. It was so seldom I got the chance to feel sorry for anyone except myself. "But I think you'll find she understands."

"She knows, all right," Danny remarked as he went on into the kitchen, "but I'm not sure she always understands."

I was surprised to find him so perceptive on the abstract level, because he wasn't what you might call an understanding person, either.

"THERE are tensions in this room," my sister announced as she slouched in, not quite awake yet, "and hatred. I could feel them all the way upstairs. And today I'm working on the Sleepsweet Mattress copy, so I must feel absolutely tranquil. Everyone will think beautiful thoughts, please."

She sat down just as a glass of orange juice was arriving at her place; Danny apparently didn't know she'd come in already. The glass bumped into the back of her neck, tilted and poured its contents over her shoulder and down her very considerable decolletage. Being a mere primitive, I couldn't help laughing.

"Danny, you fumbler!" she screamed.

Danny erupted from the kitchen. "How many times have I asked all of you not to sit down until I've got everything on the table? Always a lot of interfering busybodies getting in the way."

"I don't see why you have to set the table at all," she retorted. "A robot could do it better and faster than you. Even Kev could." She turned quickly toward me. "Oh, I am sorry, Kevin."

I didn't say anything; I was too busy pressing my hands down on the back of the chair to make my knuckles turn white.

Sylvia's face turned even whiter. "Father, stop him — *stop* him!



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He's hating again! I can't stand it!"

Father looked at me, then at her. "I don't think he can help it, Sylvia."

I grinned. "That's right — I'm just a poor atavism with no control over myself a-tall."

Finally my mother came in from the kitchen; she was an old-fashioned woman and didn't hold with robocooks. One quick glance at me gave her the complete details, even though I quickly protested, "It's illegal to probe anyone without permission."

"I used to probe you to find out when you needed your diapers changed," she said tartly, "and I'll probe you now. You should watch yourself, Sylvia — poor Kevin isn't responsible."

She didn't need to probe to get the blast of naked emotion that spurted out from me. My sister screamed and even Father looked uncomfortable. Danny stomped back into the kitchen, muttering to himself.

Mother's lips tightened. "Sylvia, go upstairs and change your dress. Kevin, do I have to make an appointment for you at the clinic again?" A psychiatrist never diagnosed members of his own family — that is, not officially; they couldn't help offering thumbnail diagnoses any more than they could help having thumbnails.

"No use," I said, deciding it was safe to drop into my chair. "Who can adjust me to an environment to which I'm fundamentally unsuited?"

"Maybe there is something physically wrong with him, Amy," my father suggested hopefully. "Maybe you should make an appointment for him at the cure-all?"

Mother shook her neatly coiffed head. "He's been to it dozens of times and he always checks out in splendid shape. None of us can spare the time to go with him again, just on an off-chance, and he could hardly be allowed to make such a long trip all by himself. Pity there isn't a machine in every community, but, then, we don't really need them."

NOW THAT the virus diseases had been licked, people hardly ever got sick any more and, when they did, it was mostly psychosomatic. Life was so well organized that there weren't even many accidents these days. It was a safe, orderly existence for those who fitted into it — which accounted for more than ninety-five per cent of the population. The only ones who didn't adjust were those who couldn't, like me — psi-deficients, throwbacks to an earlier era. There were no physical cripples, because any-



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body could have a new arm or a new leg grafted on, but you couldn't graft psi powers onto an atavism or, if you could, the technique hadn't been developed yet.

"I feel a sense of impending doom brooding over this household," my youngest brother remarked cheerfully as he vaulted into his chair.

"You always do, Timothy," my mother said, unfolding her napkin. "And I must say it's not in good taste, especially at breakfast."

He reached for his juice. "Guess this is a doomed household. And what was all that emotional uproar about?"

"The usual," Sylvia said from the doorway before anyone else could answer. She slid warily into her chair. "Hey, Dan, I'm here!" she called. "If anything else comes in, it comes in manually, understand?"

"Oh, all right." Dan emerged from the kitchen with a tray of food floating ahead of him.

"The usual? Trouble with Kev?" Tim looked at me narrowly. "Somehow my sense of ominousness is connected with him."

"Well, that's perfectly natural —" Sylvia began, then stopped as Mother caught her eye.

"I didn't mean that," Tim said. "I still say Kev's got something we can't figure out."

"You've been saying that for years," Danny protested, "and he's been tested for every faculty under the Sun. He can't telepath or teleport or telekinesthesize or even teletype. He can't precognize or prefix or prepossess. He can't —"

"Strictly a bundle of no-talent, that's me," I interrupted, trying to keep my animal feelings from getting the better of me. That was how my family thought of me, I knew — as an animal, and not a very lovable one, either.

"No," Tim said, "he's just got something we haven't developed a test for. It'll come out some day, you'll see." He smiled at me.

I SMILED at him gratefully; he was the only member of my family who really seemed to like me in spite of my handicap. "It won't work, Tim. I know you're trying to be kind, but —"

"He's not saying it just to be kind," my mother put in. "He means it. Not that I want to arouse false hopes, Kevin," she added with grim scrupulousness. "Tim's awfully young yet and I wouldn't trust his extracurricular prognostications too far."

Nonetheless, I couldn't help feeling a feeble renewal of old hopes. After all, young or not, Tim was a hell of a good prognosticator; he wouldn't have risen so rapidly to the position he held



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in the Weather Bureau if he hadn't been pretty near tops in foreboding.

Mother smiled sadly at my thoughts, but I didn't let that discourage me. As Danny had said, she *knew* but she didn't really *understand*. Nobody, for all of his or her psi power, really understood me.

BREAKFAST was finally over and the rest of my family dispersed to their various jobs. Father simply took his briefcase and disappeared — he was a traveling salesman and he had a morning appointment clear across the continent. The others, not having his particular gift, had to take the helibus to their different destinations. Mother, as I said, was a psychiatrist. Sylvia wrote advertising copy. Tim was a meteorologist. Dan was a junior executive in a furniture moving company and expected a promotion to senior rank as soon as he achieved a better mental grip on pianos.

Only I had no job, no profession, no place in life. Of course there were certain menial tasks a psi-negative could perform, but my parents would have none of them — partly for my sake, but mostly for the sake of their own community standing.

"We don't need what little money Kev could bring in," my father always said. "I can afford to support my family. He can stay home and take care of the house."

And that's what I did. Not that there was much to do except call a techno whenever one of the servomechanisms missed a beat. True enough, those things had to be watched mighty carefully because, if they broke down, it sometimes took days before the repair and/or replacement robots could come. There never were enough of them because ours was a constructive society. Still, being a machine-sitter isn't very much of a career. And every function that wasn't the prerogative of a machine could be done ten times more quickly and efficiently by some member of my family than I could do it. If I went ahead and did something anyway, they would just do it all over again when they got home.

So I had nothing to do all day. I had a special dispensation to take books out of the local Archives, because I was a deficient and couldn't receive the tellie programs. Almost everybody on Earth was telepathic to some degree and could get the amplified projections even if he couldn't transmit or receive with his natural powers. But I got nothing. I had to derive all my recreation from reading, and you can get awfully tired of books,



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especially when they're all at least a hundred years old and written by primitives. I could borrow sound tapes, but they also bored me after a while.

I thought maybe I could develop a talent for composing or painting, which would classify me as a telesensitive — artistic ability being considered as the oldest, if least important, psi power — but I couldn't even do anything like that.

About all there was left for me was to take long walks. Athletics were out of the question; I couldn't compete with psi-boys and they didn't want to compete with me. All the people in the neighborhood knew me and were nice to me, but I didn't need to be a 'path to tell what they were saying to one another when I hove into sight. "There's that oldest Faraday boy. Pity, such a talented family, to have a defective."

I didn't have a girl, either. Although some of them were sort of attracted to me — I could see that — they could hardly go out with me without exposing themselves to ridicule. In their sandals, I would have done the same thing, but that didn't stop me from hating them.

I WISHED I had been born a couple of hundred years ago — before people started playing around with nuclear energy and filling the air with radiations that they were afraid would turn human beings into hideous monsters. Instead, they developed the psi powers that had always been latent in the species until we developed into a race of supermen. I don't know why I say *we* — in 1960 or so, I might have been considered superior, but in 2102 I was just the Faradays' idiot boy.

Exploring space should have been my hope. If there had been anything useful or interesting on any of the other planets, I might have found a niche for myself there. In totally new surroundings, the psi powers geared to another environment might not be an advantage. But by the time I was ten, it was discovered that the other planets were just barren hunks of rock, with pressures and climates and atmospheres drastically unsuited to human life. A year or so before, the hyperdrive had been developed on Earth and ships had been sent out to explore the stars, but I had no hope left in that direction any more.

I was an atavism in a world of peace and plenty. Peace, because people couldn't indulge in war or even crime with so many telepaths running around — not because, I told myself, the capacity for primitive behavior wasn't just as latent in everybody else as the psi talent seemed latent in me.



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Tim must be right, I thought — I must have some undreamed-of power that only the right circumstances would bring out. But what was that power?

For years I had speculated on what my potential talent might be, explored every wild possibility I could conceive of and found none productive of even an ambiguous result with which I could fool myself. As I approached adulthood, I began to concede that I was probably nothing more than what I seemed to be — a simple psi-negative. Yet, from time to time, hope surged up again, as it had today, in spite of my knowledge that my hope was an impossibility. Who ever heard of latent psi powers showing themselves in an individual as old as twenty-six?

I was almost alone in the parks where I used to walk, because people liked to commune with one another those days rather than with nature. Even gardening had very little popularity. But I found myself most at home in those woodland — or, rather, pseudo-woodland — surroundings, able to identify more readily with the trees and flowers than I could with my own kind. A fallen tree or a broken blossom would excite more sympathy from me than the minor catastrophes that will beset any household, no matter how gifted, and I would shy away from bloody noses or cut fingers, thus giving myself a reputation for callousness as well as extrasensory imbecility.

However, I was no more callous in steering clear of human breakdowns than I was in not shedding tears over the household machines when they broke down, for I felt no more closely akin to my parents and siblings than I did to the mechanisms that served and, sometimes, failed us.

ON THAT DAY, I walked farther than I had intended and, by the time I got back home, I found the rest of my family had returned before me. They seemed to be excited about something and were surprised to see me so calm.

"Aren't you even interested in anything outside your own immediate concerns, Kev?" Sylvia demanded, despite Father's efforts to shush her.

"Can't you remember that Kev isn't able to receive the tellies?" Tim shot back at her. "He probably doesn't even know what's happened."

"Well, what did happen?" I asked, trying not to snap.

"One starship got back from Alpha Centauri," Danny said excitedly. "There are two inhabited Earth-type planets there!"



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This was for me; this was it at last! I tried not to show my enthusiasm, though I knew that was futile. My relatives could keep their thoughts and emotions from me; I couldn't keep mine from them. "What kind of life inhabits them? Humanoid?"

"Uh-uh." Danny shook his head. "And hostile. The crew of the starship says they were attacked immediately on landing. When they turned and left, they were followed here by one of the alien ships. Must be a pretty advanced race to have spaceships. Anyhow, the extraterrestrial ship headed back as soon as it got a fix on where ours was going."

"But if they're hostile," I said thoughtfully, "it might mean war."

"Of course. That's why everybody's so wrought up. We hope it's peace, but we'll have to prepare for war just in case."

There hadn't been a war on Earth for well over a hundred years, but we hadn't been so foolish as to obliterate all knowledge of military techniques and weapons. The alien ship wouldn't be able to come back with reinforcements — if such were its intention — in less than six months. This meant time to get together a stockpile of weapons, though we had no idea of how effective our defenses would be against the aliens' armament.

They might have strange and terrible weapons against which we would be powerless. On the other hand, our side would have the benefits of telekinetically guided missiles, teleported saboteurs, telepaths to pick up the alien strategy, and prognosticators to determine the outcome of each battle and see whether it was worth fighting in the first place.

Everybody on Earth hoped for peace. Everybody, that is, except me. I had been unable to achieve any sense of identity with the world in which I lived, and it was almost worth the loss of personal survival to know that my own smug species could look silly against a still more talented race.

"IT ISN'T so much our defense that worries me," my mother muttered, "as lack of adequate medical machinery. War is bound to mean casualties and there aren't enough cure-alls on the planet to take care of them. It's useless to expect the government to build more right now; they'll be too busy producing weapons. Sylvia, you'd better take a leave of absence from your job and come down to Psycho Center to learn first-aid techniques. And you too, Kevin," she added, obviously a little surprised herself at what she was saying. "Probably you'd be even better at it than Sylvia since you aren't



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sensitive to other people's pain."

I looked at her.

"It *is* an ill wind," she agreed, smiling wryly, "but don't let me catch you thinking that way, Kevin. Can't you see it would be better that there should be no war and you should remain useless?"

I couldn't see it, of course, and she knew that, with her wretched talent for stripping away my feeble attempts at privacy. Psi-powers usually included some ability to form a mental shield; being without one, I was necessarily devoid of the other.

My attitude didn't matter, though, because it was definitely war. The aliens came back with a fleet clearly bent on our annihilation — even the 'paths couldn't figure out their motives, for the thought pattern was entirely different from ours — and the war was on.

I had enjoyed learning first-aid; it was the first time I had ever worked with people as an equal. And I was good at it because psi-powers aren't much of an advantage there. Telekinesis maybe a little, but I was big enough to lift anybody without needing any superhuman abilities — normal human abilities, rather.

"Gee, Mr. Faraday," one of the other students breathed, "you're so strong. And without 'kinesis or anything."

I looked at her and liked what I saw. She was blonde and pretty. "My name's not Mr. Faraday," I said. "It's Kevin."

"My name's Lucy," she giggled.

No girl had ever giggled at me in that way before. Immediately I started to envision a beautiful future for the two of us, then flushed when I realized that she might be a telepath. But she was winding a tourniquet around the arm of another member of the class with apparent unconcern.

"Hey, quit that!" the windee yelled. "You're making it too tight! I'll be mortified!"

So Lucy was obviously not a telepath. Later I found out she was only a low-grade telesensitive — just a poetess — so I had nothing to worry about as far as having my thoughts read went. I was a little afraid of Sylvia's kidding me about my first romance, but, as it happened, she got interested in one of the guys who was taking the class with us, and she was not only too busy to be bothered with me, but in too vulnerable a position herself.

However, when the actual bombs — or their alien equivalent — struck near our town, I wasn't nearly so happy, especially after they started carrying the wounded into the Psycho Center, which had been turned into a hospital for the duration. I took



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one look at the gory scene — I had never seen anybody really injured before; few people had, as a matter of fact — and started for the door. But Mother was already blocking the way. It was easy to see from which side of the family Tim had got his talent for prognostication.

"If the telepaths who can pick up all the pain can stand this, Kevin," she said, "*you* certainly can." And there was no kindness at all in the *you*.

She gave me a shove toward the nearest stretcher. "Go on — now's your chance to show you're of some use in this world."

GRITTING my teeth, I turned to the man on the stretcher. Something had pretty near torn half his face away. It was all there, but not in the right place, and it wasn't pretty. I turned away, caught my mother's eye, and then I didn't even dare to throw up. I looked at that smashed face again and all the first-aid lessons I'd had flew out of my head as if some super-psi had plucked them from me.

The man was bleeding terribly. I had never seen blood pouring out like that before. The first thing to do, I figured sickly, was mop it up. I wet a sponge and dabbed gingerly at the face, but my hands were shaking so hard that the sponge slipped and my fingers were on the raw gaping wound. I could feel the warm viscosity of the blood and nothing, not even my mother, could keep my meal down this time, I thought.

Mother had uttered a sound of exasperation as I dropped the sponge. I could hear her coming toward me. Then I heard her gasp. I looked at my patient and my mouth dropped open. For suddenly there was no wound, no wound at all — just a little blood and the fellow's face was whole again. Not even a scar.

"Wha — wha happened?" he asked. "It doesn't hurt any more!"

He touched his cheek and looked up at me with frightened eyes. And I was frightened, too — too frightened to be sick, too frightened to do anything but stare witlessly at him.

"Touch some of the others, quick!" my mother commanded, pushing astounded attendants away from stretchers.

I touched broken limbs and torn bodies and shattered heads, and they were whole again right away. Everybody in the room was looking at me in the way I had always dreamed of being looked at. Lucy was opening and shutting her beautiful mouth like a beautiful fish. In fact, the whole thing was just like a dream, except that I was awake. I couldn't have imagined all those horrors.



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But the horrors soon weren't horrors any more. I began to find them almost pleasing; the worse a wound was, the more I appreciated it. There was so much more satisfaction, virtually an esthetic thrill, in seeing a horrible jagged tear smooth away, heal, not in days, as it would have done under the cure-all, but in seconds.

"Timothy was right," my mother said, her eyes filled with tears, "and I was wrong ever to have doubted. You have a gift, son —" and she said the word *son* loud and clear so that everybody could hear it — "the greatest gift of all, that of healing." She looked at me proudly. And Lucy and the others looked at me as if I were a god or something.

I felt . . . well, good.

"I WONDER why we never thought of healing as a potential psi-power," my mother said to me later, when I was catching a snatch of rest and she was lighting cigarettes and offering me cups of coffee in an attempt to make up twenty-six years of indifference, perhaps dislike, all at once. "The ability to heal *is* recorded in history, only we never paid much attention to it."

"Recorded?" I asked a little jealously.

"Of course," she smiled. "Remember the King's Evil?"

I should have known without her reminding me, after all the old books I had read. "Scrofula, wasn't it? They called it that because the touch of certain kings was supposed to cure it . . . and other diseases, too, I guess."

She nodded. "Certain people must have had the healing power and that's probably why they originally got to be the rulers."

In a very short time, I became a pretty important person. All the other deficients in the world were tested for the healing power and all of them turned out negative. I proved to be the only human healer alive, and not only that, I could work a thousand times more efficiently and effectively than any of the machines. The government built a hospital just for my work! Wounded people were ferried there from all over the world and I cured them. I could do practically everything except raise the dead and sometimes I wondered whether, with a little practice, I wouldn't be able to do even that.

When I came to my new office, whom did I find waiting there for me but Lucy, her trim figure enhanced by a snug blue and white uniform. "I'm your assistant, Kev," she said shyly.

I looked at her. "You are?"

"I — I hope you want me,"



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she went on, coyness now mixing with apprehension.

I gave her shoulder a squeeze. "I do want you, Lucy. More than I can tell you now. After all this is over, there's something more I want to say. But right now —" I clapped her arm — "there's a job to be done."

"Yes, Kevin," she said, glaring at me for some reason I didn't have time to investigate or interpret at the moment. My patients were waiting for me.

They gave me everything else I could possibly need, except enough sleep, and I myself didn't want that. I wanted to heal. I wanted to show my fellow human beings that, though I couldn't receive or transmit thoughts or foretell the future or move things with my mind, all those powers were useless without life, and that was what I could give.

I took pride in my work. It was good to stop pain and ugliness, to know that, if it weren't for me, these people would be dead or permanently disfigured. In a sense, they were — well, my children; I felt a warm glow of affection toward them.

They felt the same way toward me. I knew because the secret of the hospital soon leaked out — during all those years of peace, the government had lost whatever facility it had for keeping secrets — and people used to come in droves, hoping for a glimpse of me.

THE government pointed out that such crowds outside the building might attract the enemy's attention. I was the most important individual on Earth, they told my followers, and my safety couldn't be risked. The human race at this stage was pretty docile. The crowds went away. And it was right that they should; I didn't want to be risked any more than they wanted to risk me.

Plenty of people did come to see me officially — the President, generals, all kinds of big wheels, bringing citations, medals and other obsolete honors they'd revived primarily for me. It was wonderful. I began to love everybody.

"Don't you think you're putting too much of yourself into this, Kev?" Lucy asked me one day.

I gave her an incredulous glance. "You mean I shouldn't help people?"

"Of course you should help them. I didn't mean anything like that. Just . . . well, you're getting too bound up in your work."

"Why shouldn't I be?" Then the truth, as I thought, dawned on me. "Are you jealous, Lucy?"

She lowered her eyes. "Not only that, but the war's bound



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to come to an end, you know, and —"

It was the first part of her sentence that interested me. "Why, do you mean —"

And just then a fresh batch of casualties arrived and I had to tend to them. For the next few days, I was so busy, I didn't get the chance to have the long talk with Lucy I'd wanted . . .

Then, after only four months, the war suddenly stopped. It seemed that the aliens' weapons, despite their undeniable mysteriousness, were not equal to ours. And they had the added disadvantage of being light-years away from home base. So the remnant of their fleet took off and blew itself up just outside of Mars, which we understood to be the equivalent of unconditional surrender. And it was; we never heard from the Centaurians again.

Peace once more. I had a little mopping up to do at the hospital; then I collected my possessions and went back home after a dignitary — only the Vice President this time — had thanked me on behalf of a grateful country. I wasn't needed any more.

FOR A WHILE, I was glad to be back home. I was a celebrity. People dropped in from all around to see me and talk to me. And my family, basking in the reflection of glory, was nice to me . . . for a while.

"I don't have any trouble making appointments with any firm," my father boasted, "when I tell 'em I'm the father of Kevin Faraday."

Mother smiled approvingly — Tim, a little sadly. He was the only one who didn't seem pleased by what had happened to me, even though he'd prophesied it.

Sylvia slipped her arm through mine. "The agency wondered whether you wouldn't give them a testimonial for Panacetic Pills, Kev," she said, squeezing my arm. "They'd pay a lot, and the rest of the family sure could use the money if you're too high-minded to accept it."

"I couldn't do a thing like that, Sylvia. It wouldn't be ethical."

"Why wouldn't it be?" She dropped my arm. "The pills couldn't possibly hurt anybody. Maybe take a little business away from Mother, but Mother doesn't mind, do you, dear?"

Mother frowned.

"But people would think the pills had my healing powers," I explained. "I would be breaking faith with myself if I shilled for them."

Sylvia snorted. "Breaking faith with himself. Look who's talking!"

"Sylvia," my mother said. "Please."

But Sylvia went on — she was in an overwrought state because



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her guy hadn't called her, though that was no reason to take it out on me. "Who needs healing power now? The machines can cope with all peacetime ailments. Better take your loot while the getting's good, Kev."

"Nevertheless, Kevin is right, Sylvia," my mother said. "He mustn't prostitute his talent."

"And we don't actually need the money the testimonial could bring in, no matter how much it is," my father said a little wistfully. "I can support my family."

Tim sighed.

The months went on. Once again there was nothing for me to do, only it was worse for me now because I had tasted usefulness and fame. People did come for a while with their headaches and cut fingers for me to heal, and I was happy healing them until I realized they were just coming to make me feel good. They didn't really need me. Anybody who had anything seriously wrong with him went to a psychiatrist or a machine, same as always. I healed them too quickly for them to have time to take pleasure in it. They couldn't talk for days about a three-second operation.

BY AND BY, even the cut fingers didn't come. Maybe I hadn't been exactly gracious toward the end. Maybe the whole thing was my fault. Even the Lucy business. My mother said it was, anyhow.

You see, Lucy lived quite a distance away and we couldn't call each other up because of my not being able to use the tellies. We wrote and I went to see her a few times, and then she came to meet my family. Once.

It was a ghastly evening. We all sat around stiffly, my family being excessively polite to her, thinking, I knew, that this was my only chance to get myself a wife and so they'd better be nice to the girl, no matter what she was like. And seeing her with what I fancied to be their eyes, I realized that she wasn't outstandingly pretty, particularly bright, or even very talented.

And what was she thinking? That she had got herself virtually engaged to a useless half-sense because he had had a brief moment of glory as a war hero? Trapped with this imbecile and his dull, stuffy family, and not being able to get out of it without being cruel?

What were they *actually* thinking? I didn't know. But *they* did — Mother knew what everybody was thinking, right down to the last convolution of the subconscious mind and Sylvia knew what everyone else was feeling, and the others . . . they knew or at least sensed part of what was



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going on. But I was impercipient, I couldn't tell anything, I was excluded — out in the cold — and, being unable ever really to know, was forced to draw the worst conclusions.

I took Lucy home that evening. They had to trust me that far alone because it would have looked absurd for Danny or Tim to come along as chaperone, and anyway I had been there alone before, when I had gone to see her.

"Lucy," I said as we stood awkwardly before her door, "I don't want you to feel, just because of what might have happened in a burst of — of patriotic fervor, that you're bound or —"

"No, Kevin," she murmured, without looking at me. "I understand. I don't feel bound or — committed in any way. And you mustn't feel bound, either."

"That's good." I felt a deep sense of sorrow working its way down to settle in my viscera and, if she'd had much perceptiveness, things might have been different then. But she hadn't. I took a deep breath, determined to carry my heartbreak off with dignity. "Well, good-by, Lucy."

ALTHOUGH she had never really been close to me — in fact, I had never so much as kissed her — I felt lonelier now, without even the hope of her, than I ever had before. I began to take my long walks in the park again, brooding over the power that might have been mine, if only I hadn't been such a damn fool as to give freely without asking anything in return. During the war, I could have got anything I wanted in exchange for what I'd done, or, rather, for what I could do, but I'd been too busy healing. Now it was too late for asking.

Nature, being all I had left, became closer to me than ever before. And one morning, after a violent storm the night before, I mourned over the fallen trees and smashed flowers as I had never mourned over fallen and smashed men — first, because I hadn't cared, and then because I had known I could help.

Come to think of it, how did I know it was only people I could help?

"Mother," I said eagerly when I came home that evening, "I can heal other things besides people! Trees and shrubs and —"

"That's nice, dear. Perhaps we can get you a job with the Park Department if you're tired of sitting home, and in the meantime you'd better comb those leaves out of your hair. Sylvia, did you call that techno?"

"Yes, Mother," Sylvia said gloomily. Her guy still hadn't called. Knowing now how she



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must feel, I could feel sorry for her. "It said it'll be over as soon as it can, but that it might take days."

"We'll have to eat synthetics for dinner if that stove isn't fixed soon," my mother said fretfully, and went off into the kitchen to mess around with the machinery and thus make certain the techno had a real hard job on its hands when it finally did show up.

Oh, the devil with it, I thought. No use hoping to interest the family in any extension of my gift that had no practical value except for nature lovers. I might as well seize such meager chances as were still open to me. I wasn't going to be an idealistic idiot any longer.

"Sylvie," I said to my sister, "I've changed my mind about that testimonial."

She looked blankly at me out of her reverie. "What testimonial?"

"The — you know, the Panacetic Pills."

She laughed and patted me on the shoulder, not unkindly, because she could probably feel a sympathy in me now that she never could before. "Too late for that, honey. Your name wouldn't mean a thing any more."

So many of them owed their lives to me — and yet they had forgotten me.

Tim looked at me. "Be careful, Kev," he said anxiously.

"Careful of what?"

"I don't know exactly." He ran his hand through his hair. "But be careful, won't you?"

Just at that moment, an easy chair floated in from the next room, banged into me, swerved, and crashed into a table. Danny, who had been thinking of going into interior decoration as a sideline to his business, had been making the furniture leap without looking first.

I GAVE TIM a reproachful glance as I used my gift to heal my bruised shin. "You might have been a little more explicit," I complained. "I'm no 'path."

"I didn't mean —" But Danny caromed into Tim on his way to inspect the damage. My whole family was so used to relying on their psi powers that they were pretty clumsy when it came to using the merely physical ones.

Danny looked sadly at the wreckage. The chair was only nicked, but the table was pretty well smashed. "Gee, Kev," he said mournfully, "if only you could fix furniture the way you fix up people."

"I can heal trees," I said. "And they're wood."

"So try the table," Sylvia proposed. "It's going to cost you anything?"

Danny looked at me hopefully.



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I went over and touched the table. At first nothing happened. And then the shattered bits of wood sort of shimmered together and it was whole again.

Danny's and Sylvia's eyes bugged out. So did mine, as a matter of fact. Only Tim didn't look surprised, just a little sadder.

Mother appeared from the kitchen so fast, you'd think she'd caught teleportation from Father. "Kevin!" she cried, her eyes shining with an enthusiasm that my healing of people had never evoked in her. She was a conscientious psychiatrist, but a passionate cook. "Come in here and see what you can do with this stove."

My siblings treading on my heels, I went in and fixed it. Like that. She looked at me with genuine mother love in her eyes. "My boy," she breathed adoringly.

"Pianos!" Danny yelped suddenly. Everybody looked at him. "If you worked along with me, Kev," he explained, "nobody would ever have to know if I dropped 'em. I could be a senior executive and no questions asked."

"But that wouldn't be ethical," Sylvia suggested, with a sidelong glance at me.

"My ethical values have come down to Earth," I said. "Be glad to help you out, Dan. And the same goes for you, Sylvie. 'Use Kevin Faraday. A Million Times More Efficient than Glue.' Nothing for nothing any more, though — I have to be as professional as everybody and I've got a career to get started."

Sylvia sighed. "I wish there were other things you could fix besides people and furniture. Intangibles."

"Like broken hearts, maybe?"

She smiled. "Maybe."

"I'll try," I said, and I concentrated.

Just then, the telliebell rang and Tim, being youngest, went to answer it. When he came back, he was smiling. "For you, Sylvie. Lennie."

"Lennie!" Sylvia yelped joyously. She ran toward the tellie, dashed back, planted a wet kiss on my cheek, and scurried off to the booth.

"Well, gosh!" Danny said.

"Maybe it's going to be all right," Tim said, precognizing hard. "Power doesn't necessarily corrupt."

"You could make that part of your service, Kev," Danny suggested. "Mending broken hearts, I mean, not corrupting. Hey, where are you going?"

"To catch a helibus," I said. "There's a broken heart that needs fixing immediately. And it's for me, so nothing for nothing still goes."

— EVELYN E. SMITH



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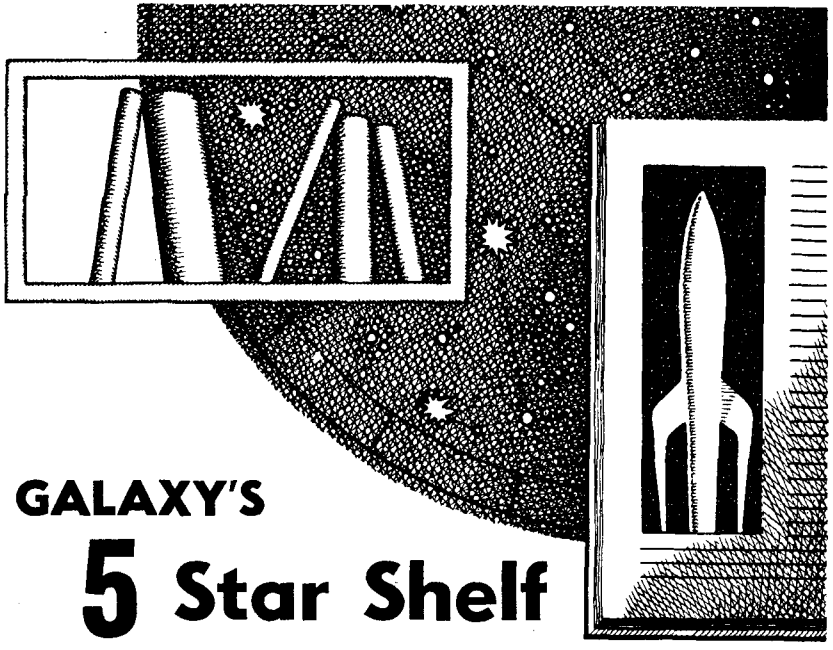

# GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

*THE BIG BALL OF WAX by Shepherd Mead. Simon & Schuster,* $3.50

I UNACCOUNTABLY missed this one when it came out last year — but let me inform you it is not to be missed! The *Space Merchants* and *Player Piano* were hot satires on advertising and big business; now take a look at this one. But don't forget to wear smoked glasses — this book sizzles!

The theme is the invention of a machine that makes it possible for you to experience every sensation and emotion in the world, from skiing and eating Crunchies to war and s-x, and exploring them *to the full,* while sitting in your arm chair. Old hat? Not the way Mister Mead puts it down!

This story of our civilization in the 1990s, and how it was irretrievably taken over by the advertisers, is told by one of them — and no conversion to a noble rebellion takes place, either, as it did in the Pohl-Kornbluth masterpiece previously mentioned.

The saccharinity of this fellow's style makes the book not only good satire but magnificent parody: Mead has mercilessly



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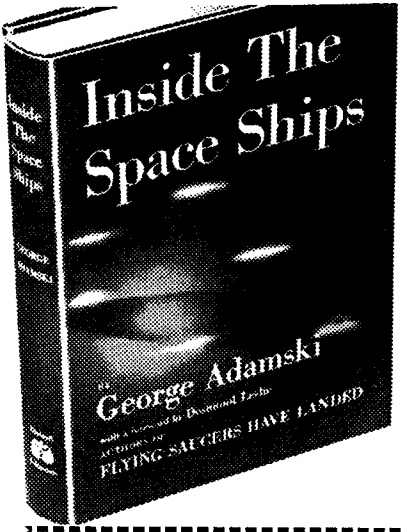
# *Now read what has happened to GEORGE ADAMSKI since he wrote the famous incidents in Flying Saucers Have Landed*

**INSIDE THE SPACE SHIPS is Adamski's own story of what has happened to him since that memorable November 20, 1952, when he first made personal contact with a man from another world . . . since December 13, 1952, when he took the first photographs of the same saucer that brought his original visitor.**

• Now he tells of his first meeting, a few months later, with a second man from another world—his first meeting with one who speaks to him. This second visitor brings him to a Venusian Scout (flying saucer) and this, in turn, brings him to a mother ship. Later he is conveyed in both a Saturnian Scout and a Saturnian mother ship. Adamski tells us what transpires in these space craft and what the men and women from other worlds have told him.

• Adamski's photographs of flying saucers, originally published in FLYING SAUCERS HAVE LANDED, have since become world-famous as other witnesses in other parts of the world have succeeded in taking photographs identical with his.

• Now, in INSIDE THE SPACE SHIPS, Adamski gives us 16 photographs and other illustrations, not only of the flying saucers, but of the great space ships from which they are launched. The main group of these photographs was taken in April, 1955—and neither the photographs nor a description of them has ever before been published!

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copied the pseudo-hail-fellow-well-met verbiage of the male side of advertising; and in view of what the protagonist has to report, the parody is almost achingly funny — and sometimes mighty bawdy.

The book makes *1984* look like a funeral march (which, of course, it was). In a way, this one is too — but with guffaws!

*GLADIATOR AT LAW by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth. Ballantine Books,* $2.00 *Cloth and* 35c *Paper*

THE THIRD Pohl-Kornbluth collaboration to see book publication is entirely different from *Gravy Planet* (otherwise known as *The Space Merchants*), but nevertheless it is a good swift anti-utopia in something of the same tradition. GALAXY readers will remember the story: how the descendants of the inventor of the Perfect House finally win their rights through the skills and daring of a small-time lawyer, helped by some child gangs and, of course, by chance.

In this world of tomorrow, today's suburbs have become unspeakable slums; the economy is divided (as in *The Space Merchants*) between huge monopolies; and the "bread and circuses" of the Romans are back in newer, shinier and crueler form as means of popular entertainment.

The circuses are — well, if you read the serial, you'll shudder as you remember; if not, read this book and gnaw your knuckles.

As a matter of fact, you'll want to read the book again even if you've read it in serial form. It's a grimly unforgettable item that delivers an extra punch on a second reading.

*A WAY HOME by Theodore Sturgeon. Funk & Wagnalls Co.,* $3.50

OUTSIDE of a rather stuffy introduction by your reviewer, this book is pure gold. It's Sturgeon's third short story collection, and the first which is predominantly science fiction rather than fantasy. There is not a lemon among the eleven items included; indeed, for my money (but I must note that I am a fall-guy for Sturgeon's work) there is nothing rating less than A.

Many of the items are already well-known: "The Hurkle Is a Happy Beast," "Mewhu's Jet," "Thunder and Roses," "Tiny and the Monster," and "Minority Report" — all hitherto anthologized.

Others are either very recent or not so well known and are new to book form: "Hurricane Trio," "Bulkhead" (originally called "Who?"), "Special Apti-



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tude" (originally called "Last Laugh), "And My Fear Is Great," and "A Way Home."

The book exhibits almost every facet of Sturgeon's rich endowments in imagination, storytelling ability, mood evocation, idea development, humor, and just plain brilliant writing.

If you want to introduce literate people who are science fiction novices to our favorite form of reading, this is the book for them.

Of course, it's for you, too!

*ADDRESS: CENTAURI by F. L. Wallace. Gnome Press,* $3.00

ANYONE WHO remembers Wallace's "Accidental Flight" from a 1952 GALAXY will certainly want this book. It carries that superb tale to its logical conclusion in another star system.

For those who did not read the original story, let it be said that it — and the novel growing from it — are both based on a uniquely powerful concept: a future world in which disease is conquered but accidents are not.

People badly disfigured by accidents or malformation are brought back to life, all right, but they are not allowed to live on Earth, where everyone is now beautiful. They have a planetoid of their own — and a number of remarkable skills, too.

The story relates how these "accidentals" turn their little planet into a gravity-propelled spaceship and take it out to the Centauri system, where they find themselves a habitable planet of their own.

It sounds simple, I know, but Wallace has so enriched the idea with a memorably colorful set of characters and melodramatic circumstances that it becomes an unforgettable tale.

*CITY OF GLASS by Noel Loomis. Columbia Publications,* 35c

I'M SORRY to have to report that Noel Loomis' first published novel (serialized in 1942) is a pretty poor job. Its characters are wooden and its style sometimes unbearably amateur. The plot has its ingenious points, but it also is hardly breathtaking in its originality.

The story is about a crew of three humans who return to Earth from the first near-light-speed journey in space to find (natch) the world is a lot older than it was when they left a few weeks before. The old mass-time paradox, you know. As a matter of fact, it's 800,000 years older and an odd race of "Glass Men" are fighting off the attacks of some bestial remnants of humanity who live in caves.



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Loomis has an active imagination and if only the book were better conceived and written, it could be recommended as a good, though minor, addition to science fiction's dreams of the far-distant future.

As it is, I can only suggest that you won't, at the price, lose much by trying it.

*THE MARTIAN WAY AND OTHER STORIES by Isaac Asimov. Doubleday & Co., $2.95*

THIS collection is actually a careful selection and is, of course, a worthwhile item — as is almost everything that Mr. Asimov turns out.

Two novelets from GALAXY (the title story and "The Deep"), one from *Astounding* ("Sucker Bait"), and another ("Youth") from one of Space Publication's magazines make up the 222-page collection.

Asimov addicts will have to have it. And those who are new to his work will find it an excellent introduction to the style and the imagination of one of science fiction's important writers.

There's a thriller on Martian colonization and a water shortage; another on invaders from space which carries a terrific kicker in its tail; a different sort of invasion story in which the people of a far planet make contact with an Earth human (who doesn't know it!) for lifesaving purposes; and a galactic exploration novelet in which a most annoying young man with an insatiable curiosity and an eidetic memory saves the lives of the spaceship crew very much against their wills.

Four science fiction adventures at the top of Asimov's best.

*UNDER THE TRIPLE SUNS by Stanton A. Coblentz. Fantasy Press, $3.00*

THE JACKET says, "A brand new science novel never published before in any form," and I cannot say I'm surprised by that fact. Any story that uses the word "orbs" as a synonym for eyes puts itself pretty well behind the eight ball as far as I am concerned.

If the tale had any striking originality, I might forgive the Victorian style, but it has nothing new or even interesting to offer, at least to me.

The world's been destroyed by a "Cosmic Blight," no less, and three humans — boy, girl, boy — escape to an alien planet, where they help to save a race of birdlike people called Lilbro from a race of monsters known as Ugwugs.

You can take it from there.

—GROFF CONKLIN



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# The Lights on Precipice Peak

By STEPHEN TALL

Illustrated by NEWMAN

***How warm should a handshake be? The answer may be more vital than you could guess!***

THE THREE young men sat quietly and watched the faint eerie glow. It was ruddy and small, a spot of dull red color. For perhaps five or six minutes it showed, moving slowly along what seemed to be the lip of Bighorn Glacier, six miles away and seven thousand feet up in the thin cold air. Then it vanished.

John Drinkard lowered his binoculars. "Well, that's that. You can see it, but still you can't. The



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glasses don't help a bit."

"Spooks!" said Chuck Evers. He wriggled his muscular shoulders, slipped down onto the small of his back in the chair, and propped long legs on the porch railing.

"Spooks?" Carl Royston's brow wrinkled puzzedly. Drinkard and Evers both watched with suppressed amusement as his face suddenly cleared and he almost smiled. "Ah, yes, apparitions."

"Haunts," Chuck said. "Hobgoblins. Ghosts. Banshees."

"Banshees wail," said Drinkard.

Royston's pale eyes glowed with interest. "This you can say for the lights of Precipice Peak — they are quiet."

"Are you sure?" John Drinkard asked. "How do you know that every coyote you hear is a coyote?"

"At any rate," said Royston, "if they make sounds, they are the sounds of the country." He shivered slightly. "A miserable country." he added.

John Drinkard was thick and blocky, with big hands and a square chin. Chuck Evers was long and sinewy. Beside them, Royston seemed a pale, slight figure, his thin face sallow, his shoulders ever hunched against the crisp western air.

"You are speaking of the land I love," said Chuck Evers. "If you don't like it, why stay around?"

ROYSTON shrugged. "It is supposed to make me a man of vigor, with red corpuscles and a need for cold shower baths. Actually, there is nothing wrong with me. I was simply born to sit and watch while great louts like you run and wrestle and climb and sweat." He shifted his gaze to the peak, now a dark silhouette against the ice-clear stars. "There, the light shows again."

Slowly the red glow progressed along a cliff face, much higher than it had before. For minutes it moved along steadily, then faded.

"That thing," said Evers suddenly, "was goin' along Fifth Avenue. Spooks don't need a route of ascent, even up Precipice. All of a sudden, the lights of Precipice Peak are gettin' solid. I got a feelin' they'll leave sign."

"Sign?" Royston's voice went up in the darkness. There was the familiar pause, then Royston's satisfied tone: "Ah, yes, traces."

"Right — traces, tracks, spoor. Only mystery about those lights is, we don't know who makes them. But they're gettin' to be a tourist attraction. Maybe that's a lead."

"How many trips have there been up Precipice this season?" Royston queried softly.

"Fifteen or so," John Drinkard said, "and the boy has some-



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thing. Any sign on Fifth Avenue or across Bighorn would have been seen by now. There've been some good mountain men on the Peak this summer. Some of 'em don't miss much."

Royston hugged his narrow shoulders and made himself small in his chair, shivering again as the chill mountain breeze blew across the porch of the Lodge.

"Over the swamps of my native Louisiana, where I wish I now was, I have seen balls of fire go drifting. It is swamp gas, methane, slowly oxidizing and glowing. Could this on the mountain be something like?"

"It's almost impossible," said Evers. "And anyhow," he added stubbornly, "balls of gases wouldn't follow a trail. Those blasted lights do."

John Drinkard rose easily, stretched his thick arms wide.

"Tomorrow, Chuck, tomorrow!" he reminded. "Take it easy, boy. Tomorrow you can look for yourself, remember? At daybreak, we go up to solve the mystery of the lights."

"Ghastly," said Royston. "To go out at dawn is as bad as eating raw flesh. But tap on my cabin door when you go by. I will wave to you from the window."

JOHN DRINKARD swung his nailed short boots along the trail with a steady, satisfying rhythm. Ahead of him, Chuck Evers set the pace, an easy, loose-jointed shamble that ate up the mountain miles. They were a good team. They felt the trail alike.

Drinkard swelled his big chest, then exhaled gustily, as though to expel the last of the tainted air of the settlements below. He warmed slowly to a climb approach and he would have liked a breather. Ahead, the trail switched back sharply.

At the switchback, Evers broke his stride, swung the packsack from his shoulders and leaned his long frame against a boulder.

"Break," he said. "I heard you heave like a foundered mule."

John Drinkard grinned. He shrugged off his own pack. "It'll be good to enjoy the view and not have to look at your silly hat."

Chuck tilted the Swiss mountaineer's hat, complete with eagle feather.

"These are the Alps of America," he observed, "so my hat is fitting."

"It doesn't even fit *you*," said Drinkard.

Forests of lodgepole pine and spruce lay below them. Already the resort town seemed a toy settlement at the edge of the valley, and the sagebrush world stretched away east to the horizon. To the north, the big peaks



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of the range tumbled in a massive, orderly row, with lakes flashing along their bases and a vast and timbered plateau rearing up beyond.

It was West, good American West, twentieth century and solid, with clean cold mountain air, yellow sunlight on the cliffs and snowfields above. As if by signal, both men turned their gazes upward. The cutback was a vantage point from which could be seen the jumble of ridges and crags surmounted by the glistening white expanse of Bighorn Glacier and, higher still, the seamed front of the eastern face of the mountain, tapering upward to the pinnacle of the peak.

The men swung up their packsacks and shook hands.

"Good luck, friend," said John Drinkard. "Let's go and see if our names are still on the register up there."

"Good luck," said Evers. "Tonight we'll be up where the lights are. Punch me if you see one first."

"Lights, nuts," John Drinkard said. "There'll be none while we're on the peak. Five bucks says so."

Evers raised his eyebrows. "I'm not a rich man, but I love a sporting chance. Here's my five. Where'll we put 'em?"

Drinkard fumbled in his jacket pocket, brought out a tobacco tin. He poured the remaining tobacco into a pouch and held out the tin.

"Stick it in there," he said. "Here's mine."

A few paces off the trail, John Drinkard pried up a stone, slipped the tin underneath.

"Lights, yours; no lights, mine. Right?"

"Right," said Evers, and he grinned at the little added spice for the two days ahead.

THEIR steady plodding passage up the ever-dimming trail was an appreciative one. Going into the world above the trees was one of the good things of a peak climb. Hoary marmots whistled from their rocks, conies scurried, brown- and gray-barred ptarmigan crouched almost invisibly among the gaudy alpine fields of avens and mountain sunflowers and tiny forget-me-nots.

At near dusk, they laid out their bedrolls on a level bit of tundra in the lee of a massive outcrop near Bighorn Glacier. A small fire of dead branches of firs and pines that literally crawled on their bellies at this altitude cooked a kettle of stew and heated the water for tea.

The men went through the simple chores of an evening camp with the ease that comes when things have been done many times. And when Chuck Evers walked a few paces from



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the fire, stepped on a small stone that rolled with his weight, he felt with a sort of irritated surprise the little thread of pain that ran through his ankle. Tentatively he tested the foot, then hobbled back to the fire. He knew that he wouldn't climb the peak in the morning.

He said nothing to big John until he had stripped off the boot and heavy sock. Then, as Drinkard came back to the fire with more wood, he held out the ballooning ankle.

"How are you at taping, friend?" he asked casually.

Drinkard looked at the foot, already purpling as it swelled. He reached for his first-aid kit.

"Well, anyway," he said resignedly, "you got close enough to watch for lights."

Evers set his teeth as Drinkard's big fingers probed the sprain.

"We'll pack ice on it," Drinkard decided, "then tape it in an hour. Maybe it's a simple twist."

"You know it isn't."

"Sure," admitted Drinkard. "I thought you wanted to be cheerful, that's all. It's like when I broke three ribs climbing to look into a bird's nest the day before we were tackling the East Face of Long's. Then *you* were chinup."

"That was different," said Evers. "I wasn't hurting."



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When the stars were out and the quarter moon rose from the plains, John Drinkard got up from his bedroll seat by the fire. The two men had sat talking quietly for an hour. Evers' ankle was taped and he was easing it before him as best he could.

"I'm going to have a look before I turn in," said Drinkard. "My five still says there won't be lights, but the technical crew may be monkeying around somewhere."

"Take it easy," Chuck Evers said.

"I'll just skirt along the edge of the glacier. Back in half an hour. *You* take it easy!"

DRINKARD knew Bighorn Glacier. Its crevasses were so consistent that they were shown on maps. He carried his ice axe, but had no mind to use it. Only after he had worked his way for a number of minutes along the edge of the moonlit ice sheet did the whim to cross it seize him. The glacier had a good snow covering. The going was easy and the view was something few men see.

Drinkard automatically avoided the big ice cracks, then slipped through a snow roof into a shallow, temporary one. He wasn't hurt. The moonlight from the crack above showed his ice axe beside him. It was a lucky fall, except for the fact that he couldn't get out again.

Time after time, he tried to dig hand- and foot-holes into the splintery icewall. But he was freezing his fingers and making no headway. He was stoutly but not heavily clothed. The cold began to bite into him. He settled himself on his heels quietly and tried to decide what to do.

After an hour, Chuck Evers began to call. John Drinkard knew that if he answered, Chuck would probably attempt the ice himself. Evers' voice came now in measured, regular yips. And, while John wavered, from the crags above the glacier he was answered. It was a strange voice, yet oddly not unfamiliar. To John Drinkard it was muffled, but it had a reassuring sound.

Drinkard waited in silence. Not many minutes later, a dark silhouette showed in the narrow crack of sky above. From the voice's first call, Drinkard had realized that they had been watched, probably all day.

"Are you injured?" asked the man's odd voice.

"I'm okay," Drinkard said. "Just drop me a rope and I can walk up the wall. Mind the snow ledge. I didn't — and look at me."

The man chuckled. "A joke," he said, almost tentatively. "Here is the rope."

John Drinkard caught the loop



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lowered to him. Its texture was strange to his mountaineer's hands. It was down-soft, warm to the touch, and he felt its strength instinctively. He climbed it easily, hand over hand. The stranger stood three strides back from the crevasse lip, negligently holding the rope with one heavy-gauntleted hand — yet he was slender, slight of build, and when Drinkard rose to his feet, he towered over his rescuer.

Big John thrust out his hand. "Well, thanks. Lucky for me *somebody* has sense enough to walk around ice cracks."

The man seemed to hesitate, then extended his own gloved hand.

"You must not mind the glove," he said. "It is for your protection. The hand has not yet cooled."

JOHN DRINKARD was glad of the dimness of the moonlight, for his jaw dropped. But the man turned promptly away.

"Come," he said, "I have made an easy way. The one with the swollen foot is concerned for you."

John Drinkard, who had climbed scores of peaks up and down the Rockies, followed and felt like a tenderfoot. The man's odd voice and stilted phrases tantalized him, yet he knew they were not entirely strange. And the matter of the hot hand . . .

Drinkard dropped back a couple of paces. The man was setting his booted feet into a line of holes that had not been on the glacier earlier; Drinkard would have sworn to that. They made the traverse of the ice field a simple matter.

As they approached the glacier's edge, Drinkard realized that he could see his companion with an amazing clarity. He seemed limned with a dim red glow, which grew brighter with each step. In a few moments, he became as a man outlined in flame, and Drinkard could feel a warmth radiating from him. Yet the snow did not melt under his tread.

"It is the boots," said his guide, just as though Drinkard had spoken his thoughts aloud. "They insulate."

John Drinkard held onto his poise with something of an effort.

"Thank you," he managed drily. "Not only do you light up, but you pick brains. They're both good tricks."

The man ahead chuckled tentatively. "A joke," he said, but it was almost a question.

"He really doesn't know," thought John Drinkard in astonishment.

"That is true," admitted his guide. "Everything else I understand with ease. Even the many kinds of speech are not difficult.



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But only on Earth are there jokes. We can never be sure about them."

"We, huh? I thought a gag like this would take cooperation. How many of you boys are in on it?"

They had left the ice and were threading along the little ledge that gave onto the boulder field.

"We are four," said the man. He seemed to sense no sarcasm in the question. Drinkard noted, almost without surprise, that the ruddy glow had faded completely and that the man was simply a dark silhouette ahead.

THEY REACHED the tundra and Chuck Evers' voice hailed them from close by. He sat near the tiny fire, the taped foot and ankle eased on a packsack before him.

"Well," said Evers, "you took your time."

"I fell in a crevasse," John Drinkard said, "and I owe you five bucks."

"You should put the more important statement first, but we can take that up later. I see we have company."

"I'm sorry." His rescue from the crevasse and the little trek back across the glacier had been like something from a dream to John Drinkard. But now, with the familiar figure of Chuck across the fire, things suddenly assumed their proper proportions again.

He faced his guide, who stood silently by.

"This is Chuck Evers. I'm afraid I didn't catch your name."

The man's thin face showed palely from the peaked hood that covered his head and disappeared into the bulky collar of his stout, steel-smooth jacket.

"I am called Dzell," he said quietly.

The two men stared at him, and he returned their looks with composure.

"It's different, anyway," said Chuck finally.

"Yes," agreed the man. "That is because I am different."

"He can read your head like a crystal ball and light up like a neon sign," John Drinkard heard himself babbling.

Evers, though he sensed the strangeness of the situation, turned to Drinkard with concern. "Easy, boy," he said soothingly. "You've slipped on the ice before. Sit down and let's quit being funny."

The stranger smiled, but his curving lips seemed more a studied imitation than any indication of mirth. "Let us all sit and I will tell you why I am Dzell. I will do it because I know, when you repeat my words, that you will not be believed."

Evers started to speak, thought



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better of it, and closed his mouth with an exaggerated snap of teeth. John Drinkard sat wearily on the soft tundra vegetation.

"You came up to climb the peak," said the man Dzell, "but also you came to see what caused the lights. If you had not had misfortune, you would have climbed the peak, but there would have been no lights."

HE GLANCED away, up and across the rocky ride and to the upper reaches of the glacier. A dull red glow moved down the route he and John Drinkard had recently taken. Keen eyes could readily see that it had the shape of a man.

"That is Dzorr," said Dzell. "We grew in the same membrane. He is erasing our trail across the ice, John Drinkard."

Drinkard watched the glow until it slowly faded. "Very smart. We can tell tales, but there won't be any proof, eh?"

"That is correct," said the strange man. He turned to Chuck Evers. "You wonder about the statement that we grew in the same membrane. I should have said that we are twins."

Evers caught his breath. "Telepathy," he breathed. "John wasn't out of his head."

The chill night wind rippled across the alpine field. The little fire flickered and glowed. Overhead, the stars were blue and red and yellow ice.

"The truth is simple," said the man called Dzell. "We have told it before, but no one believed, and it has not seemed wise to support our facts. We, Dzorr and I, with our companions Dzinn and Dzett, are explorers."

John Drinkard slapped his hand against the boulder beside him and seemed reassured by its solidity. He shook his head to clear it.

"I don't get it," he objected. "Chuck and I could call ourselves explorers, too, if rambling around the mountains every chance we get falls under that heading."

"We do not explore the mountains," said Dzell. "Here we rest and allow ourselves to behave normally. We explore in the towns and in the cities, where people gather. It is strenuous," he added, with a sound almost like a sigh. "We cannot tolerate it for long. Then we must go into seclusion and renew ourselves."

Keen interest was replacing puzzlement in both Evers and Drinkard. They smiled now and Chuck said: "I know what you mean. Ten days in Denver — a fine town, mind you — and I feel like I'd been staked with a short rope."

"You do not exactly know what I mean," said Dzell. "Your problems are simply matters of



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preference. Ours are physiological. We cannot long maintain metabolic balance in the company of people. Thus, Dzinn and Dzett are now in the world you inhabit. When they must rest, then our turn comes."

DZELL HAD gathered a pile of small flat stones and he sat sorting them with his gauntleted fingers. They were simply flakes of weathering gneiss, fire- and pressure-derived from some granite as ancient as the range. Neither man noticed the idle movements until Dzell raised a piece to his mouth and bit into it with a grinding sound, like a man cracking nuts. His teeth were large and square, and they had a metallic gleam. They made short work of the gneiss. Dzell flexed his fingers, selected another piece of the rock.

"Among people," he observed, "this would be conspicuous. You are not adapted to get oxygen from quartz. We are."

"You make Houdini look like a piker," big John told him admiringly. "I admit that's tougher cereal than I'd want to try. But the point of the gag still escapes me."

"I am aware of that," said the strange man. "You cannot comprehend because your mind is shackled. Yet it must be evident that we are not too much alike."

He rose to his feet.

"There is the matter of the body glow. I can control my body temperature, raising and lowering it as I choose. The greatest difficulty when I am among people is to keep it down to human body heat. Normally it is very much higher than yours. And when, due to exercise and metabolic speed-up, excess energy is accumulated, it is satisfying to us to radiate it. You get the same release by deep sighs, by long breaths, by stretching your limbs. Unfortunately, when we radiate rapidly in air, we glow. It has made us conspicuous."

"We all have our hobbies," said Evers, shifting his swollen ankle and wincing. "Did you ever hear of the Liars' Club? If you like to hold office, you could be President."

Dzell did not appear offended. "I said you would not believe. When it is again my turn to explore, I will search for your Liars' Club. I can see from your thoughts that it is concerned with jokes. And this is the one thing about you that we have not mastered. Other explorers have also felt baffled. The function of odd misstatement escapes us."

"'Other explorers'?" Evers' voice lost its note of ridicule, and Drinkard leaned forward with new interest. "You mean there are a lot of incandescent guys



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like you prowling about?"

Dzell shrugged. "All are not from my environment. Many are so unlike you that they cannot mingle and so must observe from hiding. Others cannot exist in your atmosphere without artificial help. We contact them constantly. Your unawareness is a marvel to us all. For creatures so well supplied with adaptations for sensation, you are indeed blind."

CHUCK EVERS drew a long breath. "If I could radiate, I'd be lit up like a theater marquee. You sound like an old professor I had once. I didn't understand him, either."

Had Dzell comprehended humor, he would have smiled. But he simply turned away with finality.

"Dzorr is waiting by the glacier," he said. "We have plans for this time. When you return to the settlements below, it would perhaps be wisest not to attempt to explain the lights."

The next instant, he was gone without a sound.

The two young men sat silently by the dying fire. A few minutes later, both looked up, as though by signal, toward the upper reaches of the glacier. Two glowing spots, dull cherry red, moved steadily across the ice. They were visible for brief minutes, then slowly faded.

Chuck Evers shifted restlessly. He shook his head as though a bee were buzzing inside it.

"Did you hear something?" he asked.

"Not with my ears," said Drinkard. "But as plain as a voice, Dzell just said to my brain 'Good luck, boys!' in good American."

"Now I know I'm nuts," grunted Chuck Evers. "That's what he said to me."

To descend Precipice Peak, even if only from Bighorn Glacier, is no fit task for a cripple. Still, Evers and Drinkard knew it had to be done, so, in the early morning, they set about it without haste and without complaint.

Where the going allowed it, big John simply back-packed Evers. They made use of every ledge, for Chuck could rappel himself down spots he could not climb or be carried. Both were mountain men and tough, but by mid-afternoon they knew they had had enough.

So nothing had ever looked better than the cheerful figure of Heine Kolb, slouched in the saddle of his dainty-footed pinto mare, and leading two pack horses loaded with fish panniers. The ranger was headed down.

"The complete Samaritan, that's me," said Heine. "I haul fish up and Poor Fish down. Two



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loads for the price of one."

"We will accept your insults along with the ride," Chuck Evers said wearily. "I never knew what a pretty thing a horse could be!"

Heine dropped his fish cans, helped to hoist Evers onto one of the pack horses. Drinkard climbed aboard the other.

"What happened?" asked the ranger. "I saw by the headquarters record that you were going up."

Evers shrugged and John Drinkard said, "The boy here was playing rockchuck on the stretch below the glacier and one rolled with him." Evers grinned wryly, and John added, "It could happen to anybody, but it's the kind of thing that's partial to tenderfeet."

"Next time," said Evers humbly, "just leave me up there. I ain't worth saving."

They stopped only once. At the big switchback, John Drinkard swung from his horse, pried up a stone, tossed the tobacco can to Evers without a word. The ranger only raised his eyebrows.

BACK AT their tent camp on the lake shore, Evers and Drinkard were not disturbed by questions. When men fail on the peaks, they tell their own stories in their own time. Chuck's ankle showed quick improvement and in a couple of days he was hobbling about. Only young Royston came to visit.

"You have not been back to the Lodge," he said. "Perhaps you are afraid to show your faces?"

"People talk your arm off up there," said Drinkard. He grinned at the pale young man. "Not many of 'em have the gall to come snooping down here!"

Royston sat composedly on a boulder. "You cannot offend me. I was concerned for you, I was interested, so I came. Did you see the lights?"

"Nary a light," said Chuck cheerfully. He sat in a canvas chair with his foot propped up. "I told you they wouldn't show when anybody was up there."

Drinkard turned on him. "You collected five bucks from me by being on the other side of the fence. You were the man who was sure there would be some sign."

Royston looked at them with pale eyes.

"You are both muddling the waters. And you are both lying. There were lights on the peak when you were there and I have a feeling you saw them. They were quite a show from here."

"Then this is the place to see them from," said Chuck. "Closer up, you lose perspective."

Royston rose from his seat on



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the rock. "Friendship means nothing to you, so I will take my small hike back to the Lodge again. Actually, I came to say that tomorrow I leave this miserable place and go home. I have endured all the health I can stand."

"Now that," said Chuck, "is a different story. We're sorry to see you go, fella."

"Our regards to the swamps," John Drinkard put in. "Ten to one, when you get there, you'll wish you were back."

Carl Royston showed his big teeth in a mirthless smile.

"This," he said, "I very much doubt."

They watched him go around the turn in the trail. Then Drinkard took two strides to the rock where Royston had sat. He touched a finger tentatively to the stone and snatched it away.

"I thought so," he said. "He really liked us, but this time he was careful not to shake hands. In spite of himself, he has reached his limit of control. His temperature is going up."

Evers looked on with puzzled eyes.

"He never could see a joke and he'd wait to pick our brains for a new word," Drinkard pointed out.

"Royston —"

"— is a name out of a hat," said John Drinkard. "When that lad really goes home, he'll go with his buddies up there on the peak. I wonder which he is — Dzinn or Dzett."

— STEPHEN TALL


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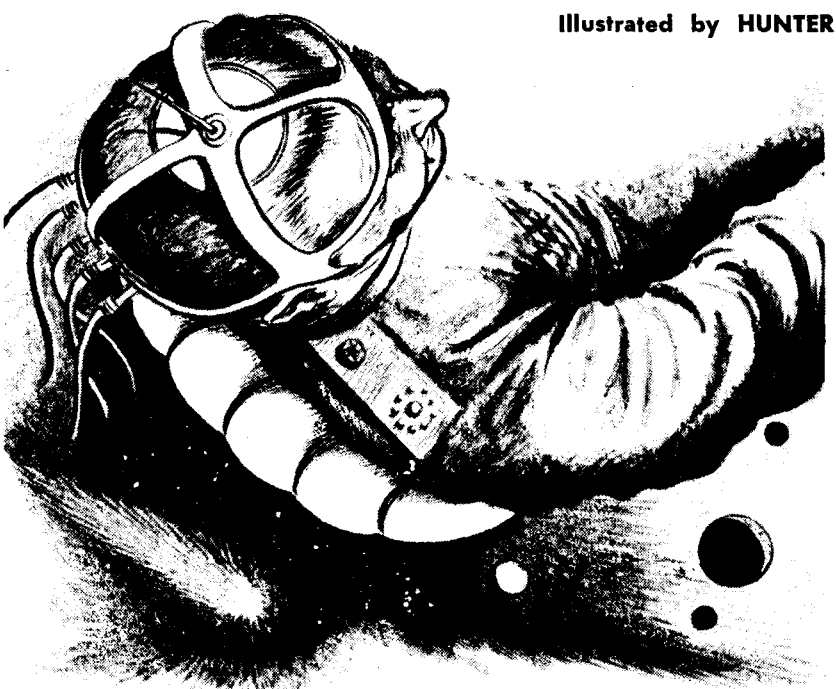
# The Game of
# Rat and Dragon

By CORDWAINER SMITH

***Only partners could fight this deadliest of wars — and the one way to dissolve the partnership was to be personally dissolved!***

Illustrated by HUNTER





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## THE TABLE

PINLIGHTING is a hell of a way to earn a living. Underhill was furious as he closed the door behind himself. It didn't make much sense to wear a uniform and look like a soldier if people didn't appreciate what you did.

He sat down in his chair, laid his head back in the headrest and pulled the helmet down over his forehead.

As he waited for the pin-set to warm up, he remembered the girl in the outer corridor. She had looked at it, then looked at him scornfully.

"Meow." That was all she had said. Yet it had cut him like a knife.

What did she think he was — a fool, a loafer, a uniformed nonentity? Didn't she know that for every half hour of pinlighting, he got a minimum of two months' recuperation in the hospital?

By now the set was warm. He felt the squares of space around him, sensed himself at the middle of an immense grid, a cubic



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grid, full of nothing. Out in that nothingness, he could sense the hollow aching horror of space itself and could feel the terrible anxiety which his mind encountered whenever it met the faintest trace of inert dust.

As he relaxed, the comforting solidity of the Sun, the clockwork of the familiar planets and the Moon rang in on him. Our own solar system was as charming and as simple as an ancient cuckoo clock filled with familiar ticking and with reassuring noises. The odd little moons of Mars swung around their planet like frantic mice, yet their regularity was itself an assurance that all was well. Far above the plane of the ecliptic, he could feel half a ton of dust more or less drifting outside the lanes of human travel.

Here there was nothing to fight, nothing to challenge the mind, to tear the living soul out of a body with its roots dripping in effluvium as tangible as blood.

Nothing ever moved in on the Solar System. He could wear the pin-set forever and be nothing more than a sort of telepathic astronomer, a man who could feel the hot, warm protection of the Sun throbbing and burning against his living mind.

WOODLEY came in.

"Same old ticking world," said Underhill. "Nothing to report. No wonder they didn't develop the pin-set until they began to planoform. Down here with the hot Sun around us, it feels so good and so quiet. You can feel everything spinning and turning. It's nice and sharp and compact. It's sort of like sitting around home."

Woodley grunted. He was not much given to flights of fantasy.

Undeterred, Underhill went on, "It must have been pretty good to have been an Ancient Man. I wonder why they burned up their world with war. They didn't have to planoform. They didn't have to go out to earn their livings among the stars. They didn't have to dodge the Rats or play the Game. They couldn't have invented pinlighting because they didn't have any need of it, did they, Woodley?"

Woodley grunted, "Uh-huh." Woodley was twenty-six years old and due to retire in one more year. He already had a farm picked out. He had gotten through ten years of hard work pinlighting with the best of them. He had kept his sanity by not thinking very much about his job, meeting the strains of the task whenever he had to meet them and thinking nothing more about his duties until the next emergency arose.

Woodley never made a point of getting popular among the



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Partners. None of the Partners liked him very much. Some of them even resented him. He was suspected of thinking ugly thoughts of the Partners on occasion, but since none of the Partners ever thought a complaint in articulate form, the other pinlighters and the Chiefs of the Instrumentality left him alone.

Underhill was still full of the wonder of their job. Happily he babbled on, "What does happen to us when we planoform? Do you think it's sort of like dying? Did you ever see anybody who had his soul pulled out?"

"Pulling souls is just a way of talking about it," said Woodley. "After all these years, nobody knows whether we have souls or not."

"But I saw one once. I saw what Dogwood looked like when he came apart. There was something funny. It looked wet and sort of sticky as if it were bleeding and it went out of him — and you know what they did to Dogwood? They took him away, up in that part of the hospital where you and I never go — way up at the top part where the others are, where the others always have to go if they are alive after the Rats of the Up-and-Out have gotten them."

Woodley sat down and lit an ancient pipe. He was burning something called tobacco in it. It was a dirty sort of habit, but it made him look very dashing and adventurous.

"Look here, youngster. You don't have to worry about that stuff. Pinlighting is getting better all the time. The Partners are getting better. I've seen them pinlight two Rats forty-six million miles apart in one and a half milliseconds. As long as people had to try to work the pin-sets themselves, there was always the chance that with a minimum of four hundred milliseconds for the human mind to set a pinlight, we wouldn't light the Rats up fast enough to protect our planoforming ships. The Partners have changed all that. Once they get going, they're faster than Rats. And they always will be. I know it's not easy, letting a Partner share your mind —"

"It's not easy for them, either," said Underhill.

"Don't worry about them. They're not human. Let them take care of themselves. I've seen more pinlighters go crazy from monkeying around with Partners than I have ever seen caught by the Rats. How many do you actually know of them that got grabbed by Rats?"

UNDERHILL looked down at his fingers, which shone green and purple in the vivid light thrown by the tuned-in pin-set,



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and counted ships. The thumb for the *Andromeda*, lost with crew and passengers, the index finger and the middle finger for *Release Ships* 43 and 56, found with their pin-sets burned out and every man, woman, and child on board dead or insane. The ring finger, the little finger, and the thumb of the other hand were the first three battleships to be lost to the Rats — lost as people realized that there was something out there *underneath space itself* which was alive, capricious and malevolent.

Planoforming was sort of funny. It felt like —

Like nothing much.

Like the twinge of a mild electric shock.

Like the ache of a sore tooth bitten on for the first time.

Like a slightly painful flash of light against the eyes.

Yet in that time, a forty-thousand-ton ship lifting free above Earth disappeared somehow or other into two dimensions and appeared half a light-year or fifty light-years off.

At one moment, he would be sitting in the Fighting Room, the pin-set ready and the familiar Solar System ticking around inside his head. For a second or a year (he could never tell how long it really was, subjectively), the funny little flash went through him and then he was loose in the Up-and-Out, the terrible open spaces between the stars, where the stars themselves felt like pimples on his telepathic mind and the planets were too far away to be sensed or read.

Somewhere in this outer space, a gruesome death awaited, death and horror of a kind which Man had never encountered until he reached out for interstellar space itself. Apparently the light of the suns kept the Dragons away.

DRAGONS. That was what people called them. To ordinary people, there was nothing, nothing except the shiver of planoforming and the hammer blow of sudden death or the dark spastic note of lunacy descending into their minds.

But to the telepaths, they were Dragons.

In the fraction of a second between the telepaths' awareness of a hostile something out in the black, hollow nothingness of space and the impact of a ferocious, ruinous psychic blow against all living things within the ship, the telepaths had sensed entities something like the Dragons of ancient human lore, beasts more clever than beasts, demons more tangible than demons, hungry vortices of aliveness and hate compounded by unknown means out of the thin tenuous matter between the stars.



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It took a surviving ship to bring back the news — a ship in which, by sheer chance, a telepath had a light beam ready, turning it out at the innocent dust so that, within the panorama of his mind, the Dragon dissolved into nothing at all and the other passengers, themselves non-telepathic, went about their way not realizing that their own immediate deaths had been averted.

From then on, it was easy — almost.

PLANOFORMING ships always carried telepaths. Telepaths had their sensitiveness enlarged to an immense range by the pin-sets, which were telepathic amplifiers adapted to the mammal mind. The pin-sets in turn were electronically geared into small dirigible light bombs. Light did it.

Light broke up the Dragons, allowed the ships to reform three-dimensionally, skip, skip, skip, as they moved from star to star.

The odds suddenly moved down from a hundred to one against mankind to sixty to forty in mankind's favor.

This was not enough. The telepaths were trained to become ultrasensitive, trained to become aware of the Dragons in less than a millisecond.

But it was found that the Dragons could move a million miles in just under two milliseconds and that this was not enough for the human mind to activate the light beams.

Attempts had been made to sheath the ships in light at all times.

This defense wore out.

As mankind learned about the Dragons, so too, apparently, the Dragons learned about mankind. Somehow they flattened their own bulk and came in on extremely flat trajectories very quickly.

Intense light was needed, light of sunlike intensity. This could be provided only by light bombs. Pinlighting came into existence.

Pinlighting consisted of the detonation of ultra-vivid miniature photonuclear bombs, which converted a few ounces of a magnesium isotope into pure visible radiance.

The odds kept coming down in mankind's favor, yet ships were being lost.

It became so bad that people didn't even want to find the ships because the rescuers knew what they would see. It was sad to bring back to Earth three hundred bodies ready for burial and two hundred or three hundred lunatics, damaged beyond repair, to be wakened, and fed, and cleaned, and put to sleep, wakened and fed again until their lives were ended.



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TELEPATHS tried to reach into the minds of the psychotics who had been damaged by the Dragons, but they found nothing there beyond vivid spouting columns of fiery terror bursting from the primordial id itself, the volcanic source of life.

Then came the Partners.

Man and Partner could do together what Man could not do alone. Men had the intellect. Partners had the speed.

The Partners rode their tiny craft, no larger than footballs, outside the spaceships. They planoformed with the ships. They rode beside them in their six-pound craft ready to attack.

The tiny ships of the Partners were swift. Each carried a dozen pinlights, bombs no bigger than thimbles.

The pinlighters threw the Partners — quite literally threw — by means of mind-to-firing relays direct at the Dragons.

What seemed to be Dragons to the human mind appeared in the form of gigantic Rats in the minds of the Partners.

Out in the pitiless nothingness of space, the Partners' minds responded to an instinct as old as life. The Partners attacked, striking with a speed faster than Man's, going from attack to attack until the Rats or themselves



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were destroyed. Almost all the time, it was the Partners who won.

With the safety of the interstellar skip, skip, skip of the ships, commerce increased immensely, the population of all the colonies went up, and the demand for trained Partners increased.

Underhill and Woodley were a part of the third generation of pinlighters and yet, to them, it seemed as though their craft had endured forever.

Gearing space into minds by means of the pin-set, adding the Partners to those minds, keying up the mind for the tension of a fight on which all depended — this was more than human synapses could stand for long. Underhill needed his two months' rest after half an hour of fighting. Woodley needed his retirement after ten years of service. They were young. They were good. But they had limitations.

So much depended on the choice of Partners, so much on the sheer luck of who drew whom.

## THE SHUFFLE

FATHER Moontree and the little girl named West entered the room. They were the other two pinlighters. The human complement of the Fighting Room was now complete.

Father Moontree was a red-

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faced man of forty-five who had lived the peaceful life of a farmer until he reached his fortieth year. Only then, belatedly, did the authorities find he was telepathic and agree to let him late in life enter upon the career of pinlighter. He did well at it, but he was fantastically old for this kind of business.

Father Moontree looked at the glum Woodley and the musing Underhill. "How're the youngsters today? Ready for a good fight?"

"Father always wants a fight," giggled the little girl named West. She was such a little little girl. Her giggle was high and childish. She looked like the last person in the world one would expect to find in the rough, sharp dueling of pinlighting.

Underhill had been amused one time when he found one of the most sluggish of the Partners coming away happy from contact with the mind of the girl named West.

Usually the Partners didn't care much about the human minds with which they were paired for the journey. The Partners seemed to take the attitude that human minds were complex and fouled up beyond belief, anyhow. No Partner ever questioned the superiority of the human mind, though very few of the Partners were much impressed by that superiority.

The Partners liked people. They were willing to fight with them. They were even willing to die for them. But when a Partner liked an individual the way, for example, that Captain Wow or the Lady May liked Underhill, the liking had nothing to do with intellect. It was a matter of temperament, of feel.

Underhill knew perfectly well that Captain Wow regarded his, Underhill's, brains as silly. What Captain Wow liked was Underhill's friendly emotional structure, the cheerfulness and glint of wicked amusement that shot through Underhill's unconscious thought patterns, and the gaiety with which Underhill faced danger. The words, the history books, the ideas, the science — Underhill could sense all that in his own mind, reflected back from Captain Wow's mind, as so much rubbish.

Miss West looked at Underhill. "I bet you've put stickum on the stones."

"I did not!"

Underhill felt his ears grow red with embarrassment. During his novitiate, he had tried to cheat in the lottery because he got particularly fond of a special Partner, a lovely young mother named Murr. It was so much easier to operate with Murr and she was so affectionate toward him that



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he forgot pinlighting was hard work and that he was not instructed to have a good time with his Partner. They were both designed and prepared to go into deadly battle together.

One cheating had been enough. They had found him out and he had been laughed at for years.

Father Moontree picked up the imitation-leather cup and shook the stone dice which assigned them their Partners for the trip. By senior rights, he took first draw.

HE GRIMACED. He had drawn a greedy old character, a tough old male whose mind was full of slobbering thoughts of food, veritable oceans full of half-spoiled fish. Father Moontree had once said that he burped cod liver oil for weeks after drawing that particular glutton, so strongly had the telepathic image of fish impressed itself upon his mind. Yet the glutton was a glutton for danger as well as for fish. He had killed sixty-three Dragons, more than any other Partner in the service, and was quite literally worth his weight in gold.

The little girl West came next. She drew Captain Wow. When she saw who it was, she smiled.

"I *like* him," she said. "He's such fun to fight with. He feels so nice and cuddly in my mind."

"Cuddly, hell," said Woodley. "I've been in his mind, too. It's the most leering mind in this ship, bar none."

"Nasty man," said the little girl. She said it declaratively, without reproach.

Underhill, looking at her, shivered.

He didn't see how she could take Captain Wow so calmly. Captain Wow's mind *did* leer. When Captain Wow got excited in the middle of a battle, confused images of Dragons, deadly Rats, luscious beds, the smell of fish, and the shock of space all scrambled together in his mind as he and Captain Wow, their consciousnesses linked together through the pin-set, became a fantastic composite of human being and Persian cat.

That's the trouble with working with cats, thought Underhill. It's a pity that nothing else anywhere will serve as Partner. Cats were all right once you got in touch with them telepathically. They were smart enough to meet the needs of the fight, but their motives and desires were certainly different from those of humans.

They were companionable enough as long as you thought tangible images at them, but their minds just closed up and went to sleep when you recited Shakespeare or Colegrove, or if you tried to tell them what space was.



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It was sort of funny realizing that the Partners who were so grim and mature out here in space were the same cute little animals that people had used as pets for thousands of years back on Earth. He had embarrassed himself more than once while on the ground saluting perfectly ordinary non-telepathic cats because he had forgotten for the moment that they were not Partners.

He picked up the cup and shook out his stone dice.

He was lucky — he drew the Lady May.

THE LADY MAY was the most thoughtful Partner he had ever met. In her, the finely bred pedigree mind of a Persian cat had reached one of its highest peaks of development. She was more complex than any human woman, but the complexity was all one of emotions, memory, hope and discriminated experience — experience sorted through without benefit of words.

When he had first come into contact with her mind, he was astonished at its clarity. With her he remembered her kittenhood. He remembered every mating experience she had ever had. He saw in a half-recognizable gallery all the other pinlighters with whom she had been paired for the fight. And he saw himself radiant, cheerful and desirable.

He even thought he caught the edge of a longing —

A very flattering and yearning thought: *What a pity he is not a cat.*

Woodley picked up the last stone. He drew what he deserved — a sullen, scared old tomcat with none of the verve of Captain Wow. Woodley's Partner was the most animal of all the cats on the ship, a low, brutish type with a dull mind. Even telepathy had not refined his character. His ears were half chewed off from the first fights in which he had engaged.

He was a serviceable fighter, nothing more.

Woodley grunted.

Underhill glanced at him oddly. Didn't Woodley ever do anything but grunt?

Father Moontree looked at the other three. "You might as well get your Partners now. I'll let the Scanner know we're ready to go into the Up-and-Out."

## THE DEAL

UNDERHILL spun the combination lock on the Lady May's cage. He woke her gently and took her into his arms. She humped her back luxuriously, stretched her claws, started to purr, thought better of it, and licked him on the wrist instead.



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He did not have the pin-set on, so their minds were closed to each other, but in the angle of her mustache and in the movement of her ears, he caught some sense of gratification she experienced in finding him as her Partner.

He talked to her in human speech, even though speech meant nothing to a cat when the pin-set was not on.

"It's a damn shame, sending a sweet little thing like you whirling around in the coldness of nothing to hunt for Rats that are bigger and deadlier than all of us put together. You didn't ask for this kind of fight, did you?"

For answer, she licked his hand, purred, tickled his cheek with her long fluffy tail, turned around and faced him, golden eyes shining.

For a moment, they stared at each other, man squatting, cat standing erect on her hind legs, front claws digging into his knee. Human eyes and cat eyes looked across an immensity which no words could meet, but which affection spanned in a single glance.

"Time to get in," he said.

She walked docilely into her spheroid carrier. She climbed in. He saw to it that her miniature pin-set rested firmly and comfortably against the base of her brain. He made sure that her claws were padded so that she could not tear herself in the excitement of battle.

Softly he said to her, "Ready?"

For answer, she preened her back as much as her harness would permit and purred softly within the confines of the frame that held her.

He slapped down the lid and watched the sealant ooze around the seam. For a few hours, she was welded into her projectile until a workman with a short cutting arc would remove her after she had done her duty.

HE PICKED up the entire projectile and slipped it into the ejection tube. He closed the door of the tube, spun the lock, seated himself in his chair, and put his own pin-set on.

Once again he flung the switch.

He sat in a small room, *small, small, warm, warm,* the bodies of the other three people moving close around him, the tangible lights in the ceiling bright and heavy against his closed eyelids.

As the pin-set warmed, the room fell away. The other people ceased to be people and became small glowing heaps of fire, embers, dark red fire, with the consciousness of life burning like old red coals in a country fireplace.

As the pin-set warmed a little more, he felt Earth just below him, felt the ship slipping away, felt the turning Moon as it swung



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on the far side of the world, felt the planets and the hot, clear goodness of the Sun which kept the Dragons so far from mankind's native ground.

Finally, he reached complete awareness.

He was telepathically alive to a range of millions of miles. He felt the dust which he had noticed earlier high above the ecliptic. With a thrill of warmth and tenderness, he felt the consciousness of the Lady May pouring over into his own. Her consciousness was as gentle and clear and yet sharp to the taste of his mind as if it were scented oil. It felt relaxing and reassuring. He could sense her welcome of him. It was scarcely a thought, just a raw emotion of greeting.

At last they were one again.

In a tiny remote corner of his mind, as tiny as the smallest toy he had ever seen in his childhood, he was still aware of the room and the ship, and of Father Moontree picking up a telephone and speaking to a Scanner captain in charge of the ship.

His telepathic mind caught the idea long before his ears could frame the words. The actual sound followed the idea the way that thunder on an ocean beach follows the lightning inward from far out over the seas.

"The Fighting Room is ready. Clear to planoform, sir."

## THE PLAY

UNDERHILL was always a little exasperated the way that Lady May experienced things before he did.

He was braced for the quick vinegar thrill of planoforming, but he caught her report of it before his own nerves could register what happened.

Earth had fallen so far away that he groped for several milliseconds before he found the Sun in the upper rear right-hand corner of his telepathic mind.

That was a good jump, he thought. This way we'll get there in four or five skips.

A few hundred miles outside the ship, the Lady May thought back at him, "O warm, O generous, O gigantic man! O brave, O friendly, O tender and huge Partner! O wonderful with you, with you so good, good, good, warm, warm, now to fight, now to go, good with you. . ."

He knew that she was not thinking words, that his mind took the clear amiable babble of her cat intellect and translated it into images which his own thinking could record and understand.

Neither one of them was absorbed in the game of mutual greetings. He reached out far beyond her range of perception to see if there was anything near the ship. It was funny how it was



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possible to do two things at once. He could scan space with his pinset mind and yet at the same time catch a vagrant thought of hers, a lovely, affectionate thought about a son who had had a golden face and a chest covered with soft, incredibly downy white fur.

While he was still searching, he caught the warning from her.

*We jump again!*

And so they had. The ship had moved to a second planoform. The stars were different. The Sun was immeasurably far behind. Even the nearest stars were barely in contact. This was good Dragon country, this open, nasty, hollow kind of space. He reached farther, faster, sensing and looking for danger, ready to fling the Lady May at danger wherever he found it.

Terror blazed up in his mind, so sharp, so clear, that it came through as a physical wrench.

The little girl named West had found something — something immense, long, black, sharp, greedy, horrific. She flung Captain Wow at it.

Underhill tried to keep his own mind clear. "Watch out!" he shouted telepathically at the others, trying to move the Lady May around.

At one corner of the battle, he felt the lustful rage of Captain Wow as the big Persian tomcat detonated lights while he approached the streak of dust which threatened the ship and the people within.

The lights scored near-misses.

The dust flattened itself, changing from the shape of a sting-ray into the shape of a spear.

Not three milliseconds had elapsed.

FATHER Moontree was talking human words and was saying in a voice that moved like cold molasses out of a heavy jar, "C - A - P - T - A - I - N." Underhill knew that the sentence was going to be "Captain, move fast!"

The battle would be fought and finished before Father Moontree got through talking.

Now, fractions of a millisecond later, the Lady May was directly in line.

Here was where the skill and speed of the Partners came in. She could react faster than he. She could see the threat as an immense Rat coming direct at her.

She could fire the light-bombs with a discrimination which he might miss.

He was connected with her mind, but he could not follow it.

His consciousness absorbed the tearing wound inflicted by the alien enemy. It was like no wound on Earth — raw, crazy



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pain which started like a burn at his navel. He began to writhe in his chair.

Actually he had not yet had time to move a muscle when the Lady May struck back at their enemy.

Five evenly spaced photonuclear bombs blazed out across a hundred thousand miles.

The pain in his mind and body vanished.

He felt a moment of fierce, terrible, feral elation running through the mind of the Lady May as she finished her kill. It was always disappointing to the cats to find out that their enemies whom they sensed as gigantic space Rats disappeared at the moment of destruction.

Then he felt her hurt, the pain and the fear that swept over both of them as the battle, quicker than the movement of an eyelid, had come and gone. In the same



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instant, there came the sharp and acid twinge of planoform.

Once more the ship went skip.

He could hear Woodley thinking at him. "You don't have to bother much. This old son of a gun and I will take over for a while."

Twice again the twinge, the skip.

He had no idea where he was until the lights of the Caledonia space board shone below.

With a weariness that lay al-

most beyond the limits of thought, he threw his mind back into rapport with the pin-set, fixing the Lady May's projectile gently and neatly in its launching tube.

She was half dead with fatigue, but he could feel the beat of her heart, could listen to her panting, and he grasped the grateful edge of a thanks reaching from her mind to his.



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## THE SCORE

THEY PUT him in the hospital at Caledonia.

The doctor was friendly but firm. "You actually got touched by that Dragon. That's as close a shave as I've ever seen. It's all so quick that it'll be a long time before we know what happened scientifically, but I suppose you'd be ready for the insane asylum now if the contact had lasted several tenths of a millisecond longer. What kind of cat did you have out in front of you?"

Underhill felt the words coming out of him slowly. Words were such a lot of trouble compared with the speed and the joy of thinking, fast and sharp and clear, mind to mind! But words were all that could reach ordinary people like this doctor.

His mouth moved heavily as he articulated words, "Don't call our Partners cats. The right thing to call them is Partners. They fight for us in a team. You ought to know we call them Partners, not cats. How is mine?"

"I don't know," said the doctor contritely. "We'll find out for you. Meanwhile, old man, you take it easy. There's nothing but rest that can help you. Can you make yourself sleep, or would you like us to give you some kind of sedative?"

"I can sleep," said Underhill. "I just want to know about the Lady May."

The nurse joined in. She was a little antagonistic. "Don't you want to know about the other people?"

"They're okay," said Underhill. "I knew that before I came in here."

He stretched his arms and sighed and grinned at them. He could see they were relaxing and were beginning to treat him as a person instead of a patient.

"I'm all right," he said. "Just let me know when I can go see my Partner."

A new thought struck him. He looked wildly at the doctor. "They didn't send her off with the ship, did they?"

"I'll find out right away," said the doctor. He gave Underhill a reassuring squeeze of the shoulder and left the room.

The nurse took a napkin off a goblet of chilled fruit juice.

UNDERHILL tried to smile at her. There seemed to be something wrong with the girl. He wished she would go away. First she had started to be friendly and now she was distant again. It's a nuisance being telepathic, he thought. You keep trying to reach even when you are not making contact.

Suddenly she swung around on him.



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"You pinlighters! You and your damn cats!"

Just as she stamped out, he burst into her mind. He saw himself a radiant hero, clad in his smooth suede uniform, the pin-set crown shining like ancient royal jewels around his head. He saw his own face, handsome and masculine, shining out of her mind. He saw himself very far away and he saw himself as she hated him.

She hated him in the secrecy of her own mind. She hated him because he was — she thought — proud, and strange, and rich, better and more beautiful than people like her.

He cut off the sight of her mind and, as he buried his face in the pillow, he caught an image of the Lady May.

"She *is* a cat," he thought. "That's all she is — a *cat!*"

But that was not how his mind saw her — quick beyond all dreams of speed, sharp, clever, unbelievably graceful, beautiful, wordless and undemanding.

Where would he ever find a woman who could compare with her?

—CORDWAINER SMITH

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*(Continued from Page 4)*
look at it this way:

We all know how clever film makeup men are — but maybe we've got a reverse idea of their job. Instead of *covering* wrinkles, perhaps they're *putting them in!*

Yes, I'm aware that it's a shocking notion, that this is very skimpy data to base it on, that all it can be called, actually, is speculation. Yet what other conclusion can be drawn?

I think I can explain best by an imaginary scene in the office of Manny Wolverine, head of Infinitesimal Films, Inc. He is negotiating a new contract with Sweetpea Beauregard, whose horizontal walk was what made wide-screen necessary.

Manny: (through cigar smoke) Well, kiddo, you're packinm in atta box office and that means you rate a deal.

Sweetpea: (squeals) Why, Manny sugah! Ah could nevah have done it without the mahvelous help of the cameramen and —

Manny: For always dollying in behind ya? Take the credit, kiddo — ya got what every guy would like to take. Here (hands her contract), take a look at this.

Sweetpea: (reads, finishes, blinks) Why, Manny sugah, this calls for *less* money!

Manny: More money, kiddo, but there's a special charge. See? Right there.

Sweetpea: (gasps in 3D) You — you mean —?

Manny: (smugly) Yeah. *Now* what's more important?

Sweetpea: This, of cohse! But I — I never even *suspected!*

Manny: Natch. Nobody does.

Sweetpea: (still dazzled) But when did it all staht?

Manny: Twenny, twenny-fi years. It's colossally bettern it was then, but it was terrific and sensational even back there.

Sweetpea: (blinking thoughtfully) But what about the ones who —?

Manny: Oh, them. Big sendoff, lotsa publicity — for re-releases, see — then pour on the juice real hard. A little plastic surgery and they're ready to start over.

Sweetpea: But — *why?*

Manny: Why take chances on new ones? Same goes for writers — if they know nothing kills a film fastern a fresh plot, they get this special contract.

Sweetpea: Oh, Manny sugah, I'm so *flattered* you're giving it to me!

Manny: Again, you mean.

Sweetpea: (blankly) Again?

Manny: Sure, kiddo. After you sign, I'll show you who you *used* to be.

Nothing but speculation, I admit, but I'll bet you've often wondered. And the facts all seem to fit. What do you think, kiddo or sugar, as the case may be?

— H. L. GOLD



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—continued from Back Cover

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